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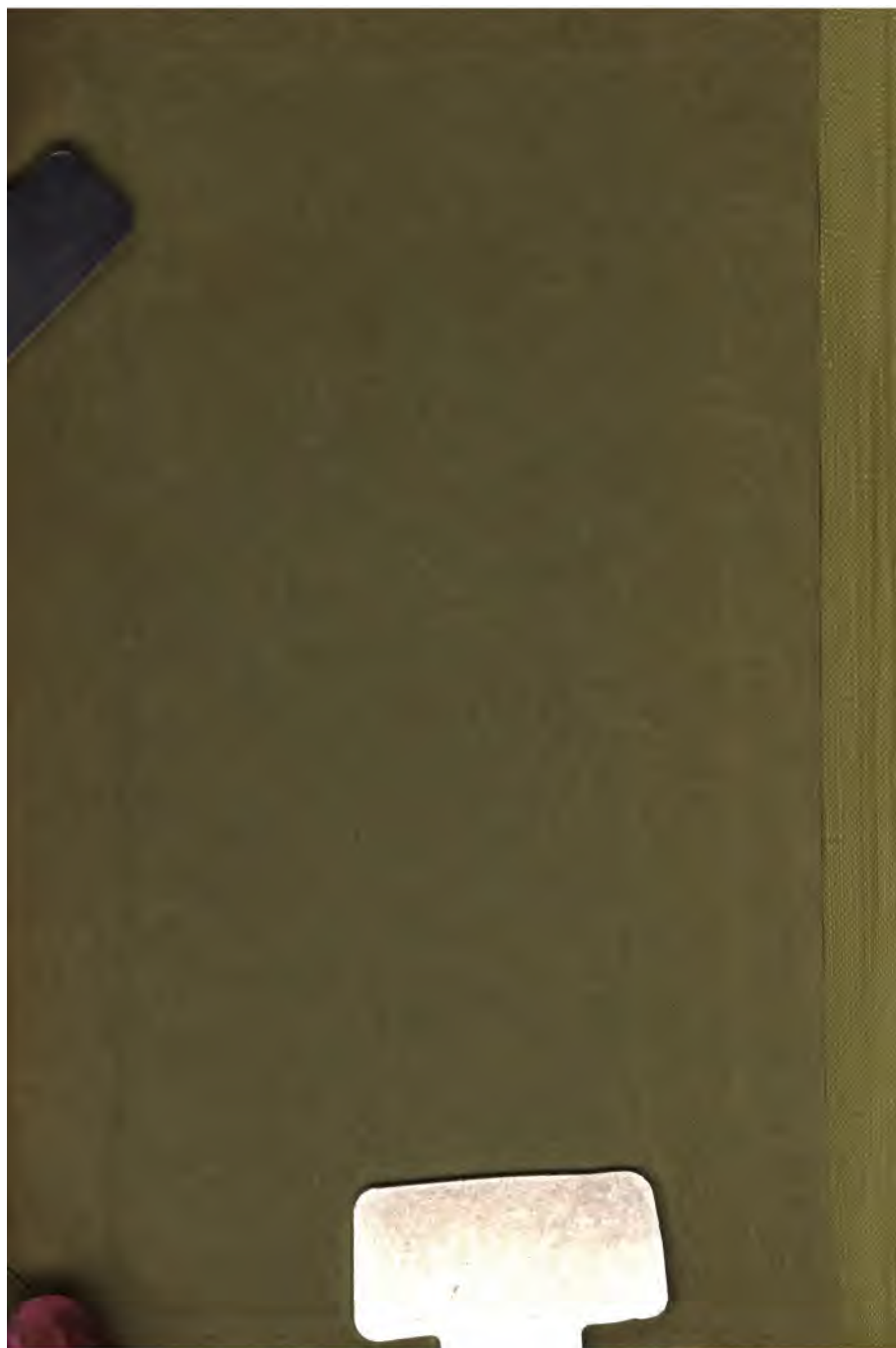
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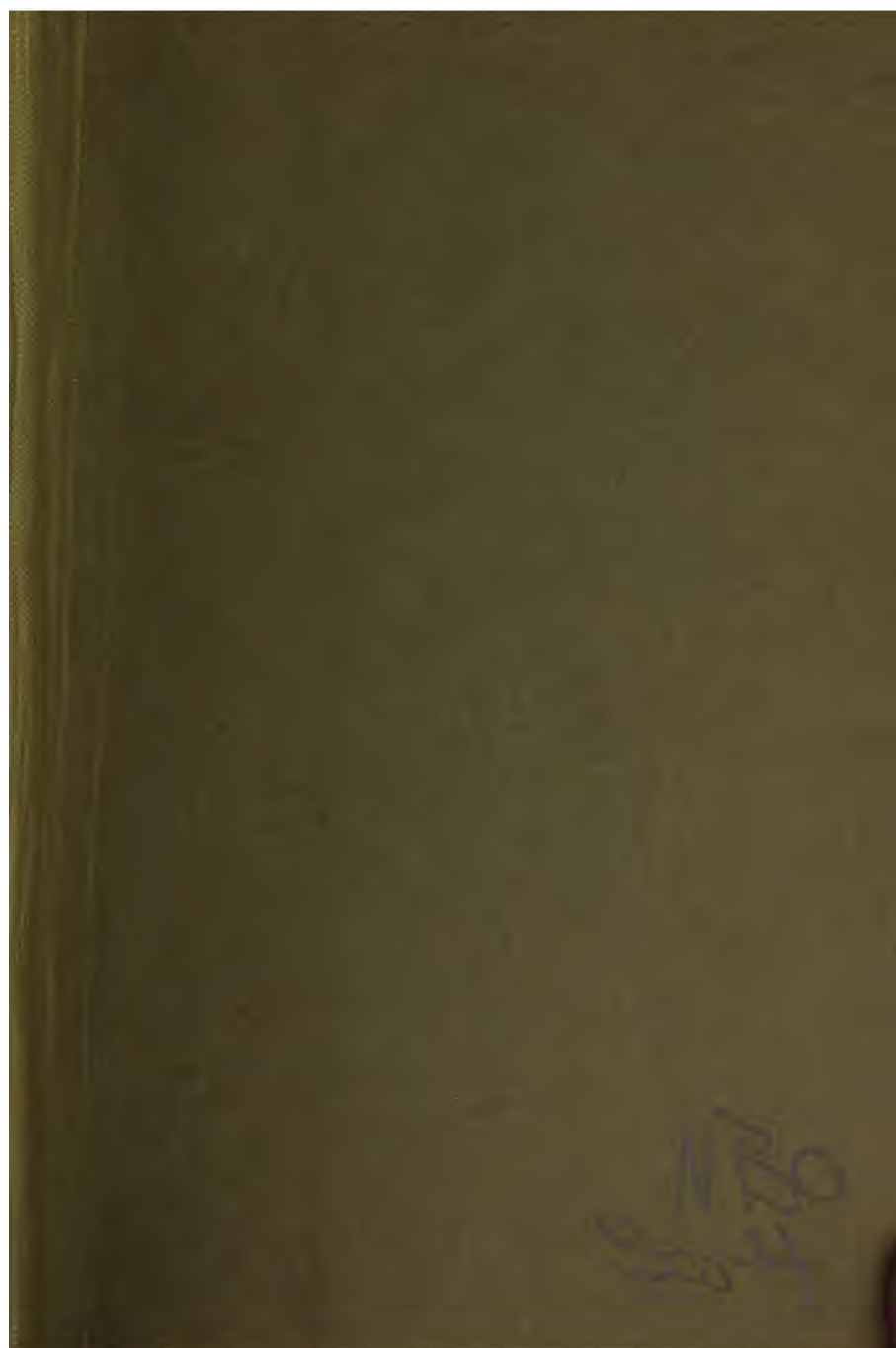
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**"MISS STIRLING, IS SIR EDWARD DANGEROUS, AS WELL AS FASCINATING.
OR SIMPLY FASCINATING?" ASKED MISS MARBURY.**

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THE IMPOSTOR

A TALE OF OLD ANNAPOLIS

BY
JOHN REED SCOTT

AUTHOR OF "THE COLONEL OF THE RED HUZARS," "BEATRIX OF CLARE,"
"THE PRINCESS DEBRA," "THE WOMAN IN QUESTION," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR
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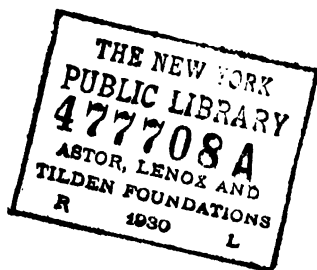
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DEDICATED

**TO THE ONE WITHOUT WHOSE UNFAILING
COMFORT ENCOURAGEMENT AND ASSIST-
ANCE IN TIME OF SERIOUS AFFLI-
CTION AND DEEP DISTRESS THIS STORY
WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN FINISHED**

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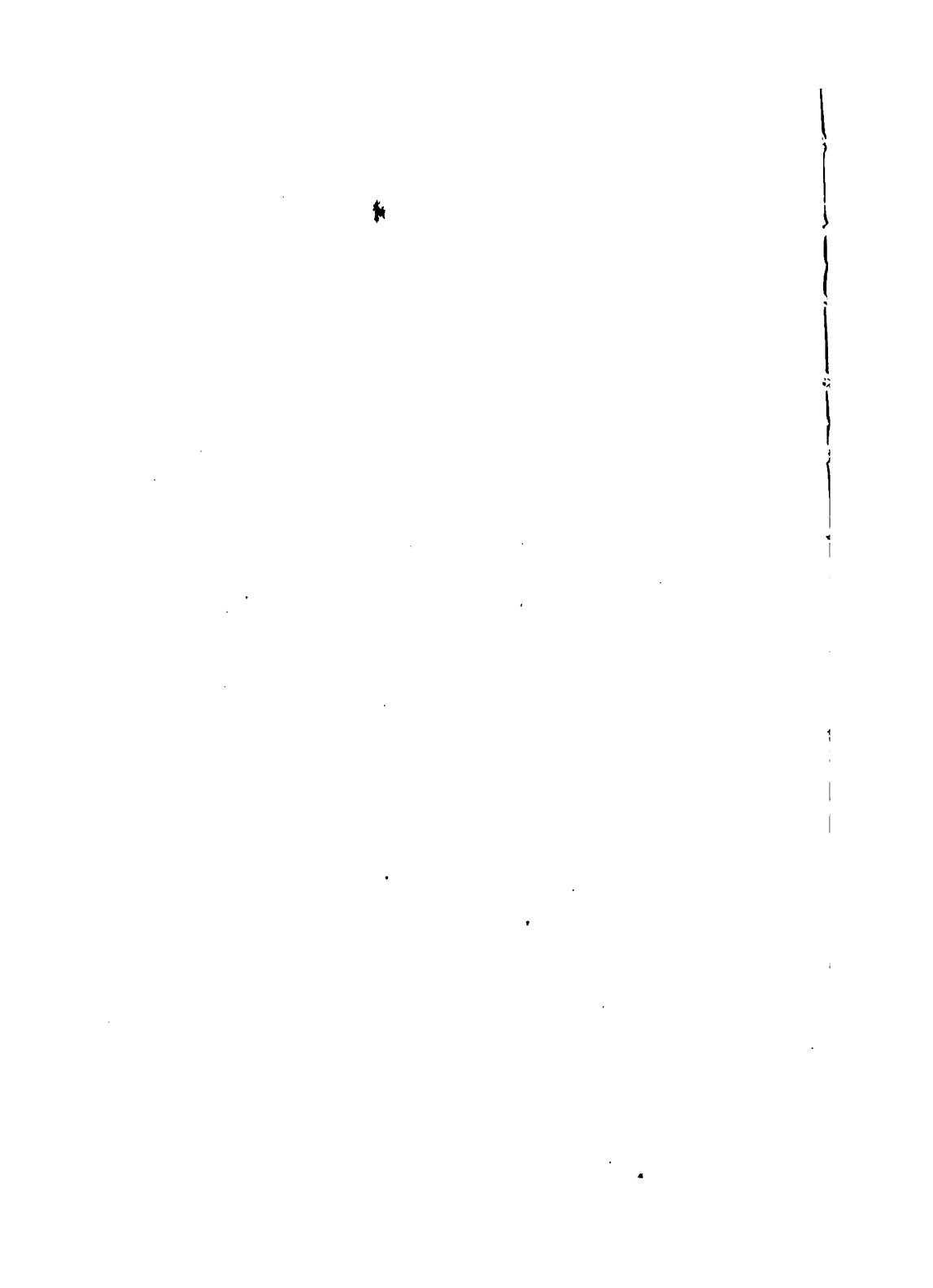
FOREWORD

I have endeavored to tell an old story in a modern fashion. Wherein I have failed, I beg indulgence; wherein I have succeeded, even a little, I have to thank the Spirit of the Past, which still lingers in the ancient capital and its environs.

To Mrs. Story, the present owner, who graciously permitted me to inspect Whitehall; to Mrs. Dugan, Prudence R.—a direct descendant of John Ridout, the Commissary-General—who gave me much information concerning Governor Sharpe; and to Miss Shaffer, the State Librarian, in whose charge are the *Maryland Gazettes* of the period, as well as to the *Gazettes* themselves, I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

J. R. S.

GETTYSBURG, PENNA., 6 June '10.



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THE IMPOSTOR

I

THE GOVERNOR'S NIECE

MARTHA STIELING came slowly down the steps into the garden, pausing for a moment, on each step, lest the Governor hear her; then she sped quickly across the lawn, and, bending over, kissed him on the cheek.

"Good morning, your Excellency!" she laughed.

Colonel Sharpe looked up, with a start.

"Bless me, girl! have some regard for your uncle's dignity," he said, drawing her down on the arm of the chair. "It seems to me, young lady, that you are a trifle clever in the kissing art, to never have been kissed yourself."

"For shame, sir! You, a royal Governor—no, I mean a Lord Baltimore's Governor—to intimate so scandalous a thing. It may be, sir, that, as to you, I could truthfully not *intimate*. . . . Tell me, who is the young man that came with Mr. Dulany."

"Ho, ho! That is the reason for the kiss: to make me amenable. Why did you not say, 'the handsome young man'?"

"The handsome young man, then; indeed, the very handsome young man."

"He is a stranger in Annapolis."

"I know that."

"And what else?"

"What my eyes saw—graceful, easy, handsome, a man of the world."

"Oh, you women! Graceful, easy, handsome, a man of the world! You judge by externals."

"And pray, sir, what else had I to judge by?" springing up; "I but saw him—you spoke with him. How far am I amiss?"

The Governor smiled. "Not by the fraction of a hair, so far as I can make it," he said. "He is Sir Edward Parkington, come from London for his pleasure. He brought with him letters of introduction to Mr. Dulany and myself. He seems to have been in a rather hard case, too. He took passage from The Capes to Annapolis in *The Sally*, a bark of small tonnage and worse sail. They ran into a storm; the bark foundered, and all on board were lost, except Parkington; or, at least, he saw none when, more dead than alive, he was cast ashore near Saint Mary's."

"The poor fellow! Did he lose everything?"

"Everything but the letters, which were in his pocket—and his charm of manner and good looks."

"At least, we shall appreciate the latter."

The Governor looked at her rather quizzically. "Yes, I reckon you will," he said. "At least, if you do not, it will be the first time." His eyes

fell on one, in the red and blue of the Royal Americans, who just emerged from the house, and was hesitating on the piazza, as though uncertain whether to descend. "It seems to me there is something familiar in that personage. Do you know him?"

Martha turned and looked.

"Oh!" she said, "I do not want to see him. Why does he pester me?"

"Nevertheless, my dear, he is there; and I see he is coming here. So take him off and make game of him, playing him this way and that; a bit of encouragement, a vast disdain; and, then, send him off again a little more securely hooked than ever. . . . Good morning, Captain Herford, were you looking for us, or, rather, were you looking for one of us?"

Charles Herford bowed, elaborately, his hand upon his sword-hilt, his hat across his heart.

"If your Excellency please, I was," he said.

"Which one: Mistress Martha Stirling or Horatio Sharpe?" asked the Governor, arising.

"Mistress Stirling, so please you," said Herford, with another bow.

"Then, I bid you good morning!" the Colonel laughed, and returned to the house.

"Well, sir," said Miss Stirling, after a moment's silence, "what can I do for you—or, rather, what can I do with you?"

"Treat me just faintly nice."

"Oh," she said, looking at him through half-closed eyes, "is that it; humble, this morning!"

"Yes, humble, grovelling, anything to win your favor."

She turned, and they passed slowly among the flowers.

"Is humbleness the way to win a woman's favor?" she asked.

"I do not know. It seems to me the proper way—or, if not proper, the more expedient way. Perchance, you will tell me."

A faint smile crossed her lips. "I?" she said. "I can tell you nothing. My favor is not for your winning, Mr. Herford, nor for any one's else in the Colony." She stopped, and plucked a rose. "Come, come, sir, be sensible! Why cannot you be alone with me without thinking of favor or love? Enjoy the morning, and the flowers, and these beautiful gardens, sweeping away to the Severn, and the golden Severn itself, or the silver Severn, whichever way you will have it; I am not particular."

"Do you mean," he said, with a laugh, "that I should go down and throw myself off the dock?"

"No, nothing quite so bad as that; you know what I mean. Now, come along, and not another word on the forbidden subject. Here!" and gave him the rose.

"A thousand thanks!" he said, and kissed her hand.

"Sir Edward Parkington is a very handsome man," she observed, presently; "don't you think so?"

"I am willing to accept your judgment on him."

"But what is your own judgment?"

"I have not any. I do not know Sir Edward Parkington."

"And have not seen him?"

He shook his head.

"Nor ever heard of him," he said.

"Is it possible that you blades of the Coffee-house must come to a woman to learn the last gossip—and him a Sir?"

"It would seem so," he answered. "Who is this Sir Edward Parkington, and from where?"

"From London—come to Annapolis with letters to his Excellency and to Mr. Dulany. A very elegant gentleman, indeed."

"To have gained your favor, he must have been all that."

"Oh!" she said, "I just saw him for a moment, but it was quite sufficient."

"I wonder," he said, watching her narrowly, "I wonder if he has a wife?"

She laughed, gaily. "Meaning that, if he had not, I might be his lady?"

Herford bowed. "Since it may not be in the Colony, best back to London for the Colony's own good."

"Are you not a bit premature? Sir Edward may

be married, and, even if he is not, I may not suit him for a wife."

"I was assuming him to be a man of taste; of 'the high kick of fashion' in all things."

"And so he is. I saw him only cross the lawn, to where Colonel Sharpe was standing, but such ease and grace I never have seen exceeded—even your Mr. Dulany appeared awkward, by comparison."

"Sometime, I hope to meet him and acquire a bit of polish," he said, with a laugh in which good nature was just touched with scorn. "Meanwhile, it were just as well to be a good soldier and retire."

"Not going, Captain Herford."

"Yes, going; you are in a teasing mood, this morning. You go to the races to-morrow?"

"I certainly shall."

"And I may ride beside the coach?"

"If you wish," she said; "with Mr. Paca, and Mr. Hammond and——"

"And a score of others, of course."

He bowed over her hand a moment, then strolled away, singing softly the chorus of the old troop song:

"Then over the rocks and over the steep,
Over the waters, wide and deep,
We'll drive the French without delay,
Over the lakes and far away."

Martha Stirling listened until the singing ceased, then she shrugged her shoulders, and went slowly back to the house.

A month before she had come out from England to visit her uncle—Colonel Horatio Sharpe, Governor of Maryland—and instantly became the toast of all the young men of the Colony. There was nothing surprising, possibly, in that; Governor Sharpe's niece would have been popular if she had been without any particular attraction, but Miss Stirling had attractions in abundance.

Under a great mass of jet black hair, piled high on her head, was a face of charming beauty, with blue eyes that warmed and sparkled—though on occasion they could glint cold enough—a perfect nose, and a mouth made for laughter alone. In figure, she was just above the average, slender and lithe. This morning, her gown was of pink linen, and, as she passed up the steps into the mansion, one could see a finely turned silk ankle, with white slippers to match.

Crossing the wide entrance hall, she knocked on a door, waited a moment, and, receiving no reply, knocked again, then entered. It was the Governor's room, but he was not in presence. As she turned away, old Joshua, the white-haired negro who was his Excellency's body-servant, appeared.

"Where is Colonel Sharpe?" she asked.

"Gone to the State House, Mis' Marfa."

She nodded in dismissal and went in, leaving the door open behind her. Seating herself at the great, broad table, her glance fell on a letter, opened and spread wide. Not thinking what she did, she read:

London, 10th March, 1766.

My Dear Sir:

This letter will introduce to you Sir Edward Parkington for Whom I bespeak your most courteous Attention and Regard. Extend him all the Hospitality in your power. I am, Sir,

Your humble and ob'd't servant,

Baltimore.

To

His Excellency, Col. Horatio Sharpe,

Governor of Maryland.

"So!" she said, "Baltimore himself sponsors Sir Edward Parkington; which may mean much for his responsibilities but little for his morals. . . . Well, he will serve to irritate Captain Herford; but can I use him to draw Richard Maynadier one little step along?"

For a space she sat there, her forehead wrinkled in a frown. She did not hear the voices at the front door, nor the footsteps that crossed the hall, until they entered the room; then she glanced up, and a smile of welcome shone from her eyes, as the man, who was in her thoughts, stood before her.

"Mr. Maynadier!" she said, extending her hand across the table.

He bowed over it with easy grace. "His Excellency leaves a fair deputy."

"And what can that deputy do for you?"

"Much," he said. "Much that I dare not even

hope. So I'll ask for only that package on the table, there."

"Take it," she said—"take anything."

"Anything on the table, that is?"

The smile rippled into a laugh. "Take anything in the room," she said; "there is none of them mine."

He drew a chair up to the table.

"May I," he said, "sit here a moment, while the Council waits?"

"If you wish," she answered; "you will have to answer to the Council."

He leaned back, and looked at her silently.

"Miss Stirling," he said, presently, "you are a flirt."

"What is that to you, sir?" she demanded.

He ignored the question. "You have half the young men of Annapolis ready to pink one another, and praying but for an excuse."

"Again, sir, what is that to you?"

"You have Mr. Hammond, and Mr. Paca, and Mr. Jennings, and Mr. Constable, and Captain Herford mad about you."

She gave him her sweetest smile. "You have forgotten Mr. Richard Maynadier," she said.

"Mr. Maynadier is not in the running. He is content to look on——"

"With an occasional word of advice," she cut in.

"With an occasional word of advice," he agreed.

"Meanwhile, content to stand afar off and view the struggle."

She put both elbows on the table and leaned across.

"Why view it from afar," she said, sweetly; "why not join in the struggle?"

"For several reasons," he said. "First, I am too old."

"I should never have guessed it."

"Second, I have not the graces that are requisite."

"I had not noticed it."

"And, lastly, I have not the inclination."

"That, I should never have guessed."

"No, I suppose not. We all are game for a pretty woman. Let a man but bow and kiss her hand, and, behold! another suitor."

She sat up sharply.

"Mr. Maynadier, I will make a compact with you," she said. "You say you are too old, have not the graces, and have not the inclination—so be it. A flirt may have her friends. We will be comrades—I to use no art of coquetry upon you, you to speak no word of love to me. Is it a bargain?"

He regarded her with an amused smile.

"If you wish it," he said. "I think we both of us are safe enough without it—though, who knows. At any rate, the flag of truce will hold us. . . . Now, I will back to the Council. I will see you at the races, to-morrow, of course."

"Yes; and I have a pistole or two which you may put on Figaro for me," she said, accompanying him to the door.

She stood and watched him, as he went down the walk toward North-East Street, and disappeared.

"I wonder," she said, "I wonder. . . . Well, Mr. Richard Maynadier, we shall see if you cannot be taught to have the inclination."

II

SIR EDWARD PARKINGTON

THAT night, the Annapolis Coffee-house was unusually popular. The General Assembly was in session, and representatives of all the prominent families of the Colony were in attendance. The Maryland Gazette had just appeared, announcing that it would not print Samuel Chase's answer, to the Mayor and Aldermen of the City, lest it be libelous, and that Chase could issue it himself. The whole controversy was of little moment and aimed at nothing. Nevertheless, it had stirred up all the latent ill feeling, that had existed for some time between Chase and his followers, on one hand, and the old residents of Annapolis, on the other.

"Chase always was a firebrand!" exclaimed young Mr. Paca; "some day, he will ignite the magazine on which he is sitting, and blow himself up."

"And the quicker he does it the better," suggested Mr. Hammond. "Chase has ability, but he does not use it for good."

"That is what gives me no patience with him," said Mr. Worthington. "He plays to the rabble—a queer trait for the son of a clergyman of the Church of England."

"It is all for effect," said Mr. Paca; "to get

clients, to get prominence; down in his heart he has the same view as we have."

"That's it," said Mr. Cole, who was a bit the worse for liquor. "The fellow isn't honest."

"Who is not honest?" asked a medium-sized, heavy-set man of twenty-five, who had entered the room unnoticed.

"You!" returned Cole. "You don't believe what you say; you are playing to the rabble."

Chase looked at Cole closely for a moment, then shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not argue with a drunken man, much less quarrel with one," he said. "Do any of you other gentlemen endorse his words?"

"Not as spoken," said Mr. Paca; "but what we did say, is that we do not endorse your course as an official. You are the Public Prosecutor, and we do not approve of the way you use your office.—That we said, and that we stand behind."

"I am very sorry if I have not pleased you," said Chase, indifferently, taking a chair beside Paca; "I understand that a public official is a free subject for criticism, and the public may impugn his motives and his judgment—with that I find no fault."

"You said I was drunk," exclaimed Cole.

"Did I?" said Chase. "Well, you're not—you're not. I was mistaken. I apologize."

"It's granted," said Cole. "Have a drink with me.—Everybody have a drink with me. Here, Spar-

row—where the devil's the fellow—take the gentlemen's orders.—Ah! sir," as a stranger appeared in the doorway, "come in; we're just going to have a drink. What will *you* have?"

The newcomer let his eyes rest, casually, on Cole.

"Permit me to decline," he said; "I was looking for some one."

"Your pardon, sir," said Mr. Paca, stepping forward; "are you not Sir Edward Parkington?"

"I am," he said; "at your service."

Mr. Paca extended his hand. "Permit me to introduce myself. I am William Paca; this is Mr. Hammond, and Mr. Worthington, and Mr. Cole, and Mr. Chase."

Parkington acknowledged the introduction with a sweeping bow, and took the proffered chair.

"What is your order, sir?" Cole persisted.

"A little rum and water, if you won't excuse me."

"I won't excuse you.—I won't excuse anybody," Cole averred. "Sparrow, some rum and water for Sir Edward Parkington, and make haste."

"Are you here for any time?" inquired Mr. Hammond.

"I should say that I am," replied Parkington. "If the hospitality I have received to-day is any test, you will not be quit of me for a year."

"You honor us," said Mr. Paca.

"No, I do not; I simply appreciate you. We have not got a more charming man, in London,

than your Mr. Dulany; while as for your Governor, he is a true officer of his Majesty."

"We have never had so popular a Governor. He is a natural leader," said Mr. Worthington. "And now, that he has bought Whitehall, and erected a spacious mansion overlooking the Bay, he has become one of us. The only pity is that we have not been able to provide him with a wife."

"Not for want of charming women, I warrant."

"No, not on that account—Annapolis will yield to none in the beauty of her daughters. It is said there is an old wound that rankles still."

"An old wound! got in England?"

"No, got in Maryland, the very day he landed at the dock, from the good ship 'Mollie.' It is common rumor, and I violate no confidence by telling. There came with him, as secretary, one John Ridout—now, the Honorable John Ridout. He was met at the wharf by the Honorable Benjamin Tasker, President of the Council and acting Governor, who had with him his grandchild, Mary Ogle—then a mere slip of a girl of fourteen, but giving promise of rare beauty in the future. It is said, the Governor and John Ridout both fell in love that day, while they walked up Green Street, and along the Spa to the Tasker residence. Five years later, she chose the secretary, and gave the Governor nay."

"And Ridout remained the Governor's secretary?" Parkington asked.

"There showed the measure of the man. He is, to-day, the Commissary-General of the Province, and member of his Excellency's Council, and no one is so close to Governor Sharpe as is he."

"A pretty enough story," said Parkington; "do you think it is true?"

"We have no doubt of it."

"Well," observed Parkington, "one warms to him marvelously easy. What ailed the lady, that she chose the subaltern when she could have had the master?"

Mr. Paca laughed. "Women are a law unto themselves!" he said; "and Ridout is marvelously handsome and nearer her own age." A gurgle, ending in a prolonged snore, came from the chair beside him. "Ah! Cole slumbers. We shall hear from him no more to-night."

Presently, the talk veered over to politics. Notice of the Stamp Act being repealed had come to the Colony a month before, and had been made the occasion for an ardent demonstration, though, as a matter of fact, it had been a dead statute and unenforceable, in Maryland, from the moment of its passage. An act, once it is off the books, may be condemned in most disloyal language, and no offense be given, even if it were the pet measure of a sovereign. But George the Third was a stubborn monarch, and no sooner was the Stamp Act null and void, than a new hobby was his, and one that

required no legislation to support it. And Samuel Chase, with a fine ignoring of the proprieties, soon hit upon it.

"I understand," said he, "that recently an application for land, beyond the Allegheny Mountains, was refused by the Board of Trade, in London."

Parkington was silent. Paca and Hammond both tried to change the conversation, but Chase would not have it.

"The Board of Trade will find itself ignored," he said. "There will not be any applications. The people will simply settle, and, when they are settled, nothing but a royal army will move them off; and when a royal army invades this country, for such a purpose, it means war."

With that, the rest broke in. Mr. Paca declared Chase spoke for himself alone, and Mr. Hammond that he was anticipating trouble; but Sir Edward Parkington surveyed Chase with a tolerant smile, and waved the matter aside.

"Do not concern yourself to soften the views the gentleman has just expressed," he said. "They give me no offense. I am a loyal subject of his Majesty, but I think that the quicker we free America, the better for both America and England. You will leave us some day, as the child leaves the parent when it reaches maturity; the only question is, when that time comes. I take it, that Mr. Chase is not trying to be offensive, and, if no offense be

intended, none is given." He arose. "If any of you are going in the direction of Reynolds' Tavern, I shall be glad for your company."

Mr. Paca and Mr. Worthington attended him as far as Saint Anne's, where they parted; the two former going to their homes, on Prince George Street, while Parkington continued around the Circle to the tavern.

"Send a mug of ale to my room," he said, to the man in the ordinary. . . .

The fellow lighted the candles, put the drink on the table, and, after a moment's wait, withdrew.

Parkington unbuckled his long rapier and flung it on the bed. Then he seated himself and took a sip of the ale, stretched out his slender legs, and laughed.

"Verily, the game is easier than I thought!" he soliloquized. "The real Parkington could not have played it better; I think I shall enjoy my visit to Annapolis. 'You are an unmitigated scoundrel, sir,' said my esteemed father. 'I have paid your debts for the last time; I shall give you passage to America, and one hundred pounds. Never let me look upon your face again—and, if there be a shred of decency about you, you will change your name. The De Lysles are done with you forever; have the goodness to be done with them.'" He took another sip at the ale, and laughed again. "Behold! my name is changed. I am Sir Edward Park-

ington, now—and Baltimore himself vouches for me. It was a lucky storm that sent the crazy ‘Sally’ to the bottom, and every one to the devil, save only me; but it was a luckier fortune that washed the real Sir Edward Parkington and me on the beach together, with him dead and me alive—and the letters on his person. ‘There is no one in the Colony who knows me,’ he had said, that very day. So, presto! Behold Sir Edward Parkington risen, and me dead. . . . It would be devilish awkward, if there is some one in the Colony who knows *me*—but that is in the future.” He drew out a copy of Lord Baltimore’s letter to his Excellency. “‘Bespeak your most courteous attention and regard. Extend him all the hospitality in your power.’ I was shipwrecked; I lost everything but the clothes on my back, and the letters, which were wrapped in oil-skin, in my pocket. Therefore, I think the Governor’s hospitality will have to be pressed for a loan. What, with him and Mr. Dulany, and a certain natural ability of my own at the card-table, I should be able to live very comfortably, here, for a year, at least. This Annapolis is a neat enough town—I was astonished at it; and they seem to do things reasonably well. The Coffee-house is quite the equal of any we have in London, and the Governor’s mansion and Mr. Dulany’s, near-by, are excellent. . . . This suit of clothes, I got in Saint Mary’s, will answer until Pinkney can replace my wardrobe—lost when the ship went down!” He

chuckled, softly, to himself. "And the fellow is not half bad; his styles are six months behind the fashion, but that is a small matter, when every one is wearing them. . . . Altogether, I think Sir Edward Parkington will have a pleasant year—at least, he is going to enjoy it while it lasts. After that, the deluge."

III

THE RACES

MISS STIRLING fastened the cross-shaped watch to the left side of her gown, pressed into place a patch near her eye and another near her dimple, and, with a last look in the glass, arose.

Her gown was of blue lustring, long-waisted and laced over a stomacher, exquisitely guimped and pinked. A sacque, of the same material, hung from her shoulders to the ground and formed a train, and on her head was a large chip hat, with feathers and pinks.

She crossed to the window and drew aside the curtain. The coach was waiting, and beside it were Mr. Paca and Mr. Worthington and Captain Herford. She went back to the glass, took another survey, dabbed a bit of powder, here and there, on her face, smiled at her reflection, and turned away. It was race day, in Annapolis.

The Governor was ascending the stairs, as she came out of her room; when he reached the landing, he stopped and looked at her. She made him a bit of a curtsy.

"Will I do?" she asked.

"Yes, you will do," he said; "even I can see that. I am sorry for the macaronies down in front."

"They do not deserve any sympathy."

"I suppose not," he said; "at least, they do not get much from you. You may take the coach; I shall ride to the course—and do not wait for me. They are sufficient to escort you."

She gave him a bright smile, and went down and out to the coach.

"Good afternoon!" she said, as they sprang forward to meet her.—"No; we will dispense with anything but a bow." They all tried to hand her in, but she waved them aside. "I cannot choose, so I will let the footman do his office."

The young men leaped to horse. There were but two windows to the coach and three men, and Mr. Paca and Mr. Worthington got the places beside them, leaving Captain Herford to ride behind, and sulk.

"You are a dream, a perfect vision!" said Mr. Paca.

"An angel, rather!" Mr. Worthington assured her.

"Why not be sensible, and tell the truth. Why not say, I am looking very well, to-day; that would be the truth, more than that is rank exaggeration. One of you let Captain Herford come up; I want to hear what he will say. . . . Do you hear? I said, one of you give place to Captain Herford."

"Paca, you hear?" said Worthington.

"Worthington, you hear?" said Paca.

Miss Stirling laughed. "Meanwhile, Captain Herford rides behind."

"And is likely to ride behind to the race ground," said Worthington.

"And should ride behind forever, if we controlled it," added Mr. Paca.

They proceeded out of the Governor's grounds, and along King George Street, to the Ogle corner at Tabernacle Street. Here, the coach was before the door, and Mrs. Ogle and Miss Elizabeth were just about to enter. Miss Stirling waved her hand, and called a greeting, while the young men doffed their hats. The Ogles answered, and then their equipage joined the procession.

Arrived at the Course, and occupying the place reserved for the Governor, Miss Stirling was astonished at what she saw. Here was no ordinary gathering, of Annapolitans and their neighbors. Instead, a vast concourse of people, with more than fifteen hundred horses hitched around the track, and not less than one hundred coaches parked within the enclosure.

"Why," she said, "I had no notion it was anything such as this. I thought it would be like the small affairs in England. This rivals Carlisle, itself."

"The Annapolis races are the best in this country," said Mr. Worthington. "We have not only all the families of Maryland represented here, but scores of the gentlemen of Virginia, with not a few

from Pennsylvania. The races last almost a week. Courts are adjourned, schools dismissed—everybody takes a holiday; and the Assembly, which happens to be in session, has risen until they are over.”

“What are the entries for the first race?” she asked.

Mr. Paca consulted his card. “Dr. Hammond’s *Figaro*, Mr. Hall’s *Trial*, Mr. Yeldell’s *Chester*, Mr. Gnatt’s *Britannia*, Mr. Heath’s *Merry Andrew* and Major Sims’ *Terror*.”

“And what are the weights?”

“Rising four years, fourteen hands, eight stone; five years, nine stone; six years, ten stone, and aged, eleven stone; to give and take, at the rate of seven pounds, for every one under or above fourteen hands.”

“Is fourteen hands the average size?” she asked.

“Rather small, it seems to me.”

“They make it up in speed, however,” said Mr. Worthington; “and *Figaro* is fifteen hands. He has run at Carlisle and at Preston, in your country, and won everything. In fact, he has never been beaten.”

A roar from the crowd announced the appearance of the horses. “What is the black?” she asked.

“*Trial*.”

“And the chestnut?”

“*Chester*.”

“And the sorrel?”

“*Merry Andrew*.”

"And the bay?"

"Figaro."

She took six pistoles, from her reticule.

"Captain Herford, will you do me the favor to place this on Figaro?—What are the odds?"

"Three to one, last night, at the Coffee-house."

"Very good," she said. "A horse that won at Carlisle and Preston ought not to have much trouble, here. What is the distance?"

"Four times around the track, about three miles," said Mr. Paca; "the best two in three."

Old Jonas Green had taken his place in the judge's stand, and the horses were forming for the break. The next moment, they thundered down the track, got the word, and were away. A blanket could have covered them, as they swept around the course for the first two times. Then, Terror slowly lagged; and, presently, Merry Andrew and Britannia had followed suit. The other three were running neck to neck. At the turn into the stretch, Chester drew away, and won by length from Figaro, with Trial third.

Instantly there was a turmoil. Chester was a good horse, and the weights were in his favor, but no one had supposed him capable of besting Figaro.

"Had I waited, I would have gotten longer odds," said Miss Stirling. "Mr. Paca, see if you can put these five pistoles to better advantage—on Figaro, mind you."

"I think Figaro will win," said Mr. Worthing-

ton. "He has the bottom, and his age will favor him."

Mr. Paca returned to announce that he had placed the money at two to one, and received, in exchange, a most dazzling smile; whereat Herford swore under his breath. Then there descended upon them all the young women, from the near-by coaches, and the young gentlemen who attended, to make their devoirs to the Governor's niece.

And, presently, came Colonel Sharpe himself, and with him Sir Edward Parkington. Pinkney had not failed the latter. His coat was of dark blue silk with embroidered cuffs, the breeches and stockings to match; his waistcoat, of white broadcloth, covered with gold lace. His hair was dressed and powdered, and tied in a bagwig behind. A solitaire was round his neck; a kevernois hat, decorated with gold buttons, lace and loop, was under his arm; and a long black rapier lifted the skirt of his coat.

"My dear," said Colonel Sharpe, "I want to present Sir Edward Parkington, whom you have heard me mention, and for whom I bespeak your best consideration."

Miss Stirling gave him her hand; Parkington bowed over it with inimitable grace.

"Sir Edward is very lucky in his sponsor," she said; "his Excellency's wishes are our law. Mr. Paca, will you present Sir Edward to our friends?"

He met them all, then came back to her.

"I think I saw you in the Row, one day last Autumn," he said. "You were riding with Captain Symington, of the Blues; I was riding with my Lord Baltimore."

She shook her head. "I have not the honor of Captain Symington's acquaintance; it was not I."

"It may be I am mistaken as to Symington, but I cannot be mistaken as to you; once seen is never to be forgotten."

"Are you sure it was last Autumn?" she asked.

"Perfectly, oh, perfectly!"

"Then, you must guess again," she said. "I have not ridden in the Row for a year. I spent all of last Autumn in the North."

"But I saw you somewhere, sometime," he insisted.

"What matters it?" she asked; "since you see me now.—There, the second heat is starting!"

This time there were but three—Britannia, Merry Andrew and Terror had been distanced—and, again, the three ran close together until they reached the stretch, for the last time. Then Trial came away, and, under a tremendous drive, won by length from Figaro, with Chester third.

"The favorite seems outclassed," said Parkington. "The weight is just a trifle too much, I fancy."

"You do not know Figaro," said Mr. Paca. "I will wager you five pistoles, that he gets the next heat."

"Taken. The weight will tell more upon him the next time."

"Again, you do not know Figaro!" laughed Paca. "It will tell less—or, rather, it will tell on the others more. Figaro has lost two heats, before, but he never lost the third."

"Mr. Paca says that Figaro has raced in England, at Carlisle and Preston three years ago, and won everything," said Miss Stirling. "Did you know it?"

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Parkington. "This is not *that* Figaro?"

"The same," said Mr. Paca.

"I would never have wagered against him, had I known it. However, there is always a chance of the horse falling dead in the stretch, or of something else happening; and past records never win the next race."

"I will lay you another five pistoles, if you wish," offered Mr. Worthington.

"And I!—And I!" came from around him.

"Such unanimity of opinion breeds caution," said Parkington, with a laugh; "and I will profit by it. No more, gentlemen, no more."

"Captain Herford," said Miss Stirling, "I will have another little bet on Figaro. Will you place these two pistoles for me?"

"At what odds?" said Herford.

"Whatever you can get; they ought to be about even, now."

"You too, then, believe in Figaro?" asked Parkinson.

"I do," she said; "six pistoles at three to one, five pistoles at two to one, and two pistoles at even odds—it will keep me in spending money for a few weeks."

"Or make you without spending money for a month."

"I shall not lose," she said; "I shall not lose. . . . Ah, Mr. Maynadier, do you know Sir Edward Parkinson?"

Maynadier turned, and, for a moment his eyes rested on Sir Edward with an uncertain and hesitating recognition. Then, he shook his head.

"I do not know," he said. "There is something familiar in his face, yet I can not say. I met so many people in London, at one time, that it is difficult to remember. I trust Sir Edward Parkinson will understand. But whether or not we have ever met before, I am very glad to meet him now."

"I think you are right," said Sir Edward, taking Maynadier's hand; "or, at least, if we met, I have no recollection of it. Indeed, I have no recollection of having met any one from Annapolis—much, as I see now, to my loss."

"The horses are at the post!" exclaimed Miss Stirling, and each was glad for a moment of respite.

This time, Figaro showed his blood. They ran easily enough, and together, but any one could see

that the others had shot their bolts. In the last hundred yards, the red and white of Dr. Hammond went to the front and won handily.

"It is Figaro's race," said Mr. Paca.

"If he wins the next heat," observed Sir Edward.

"The others are out of it," said Paca. "I am sorry, Sir Edward, but they are, and Figaro will get better; we have seen it happen before, in other races."

And Mr. Paca was right. Figaro won the next heat even easier than the last, and Dr. Hammond led him off, while the men cheered, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs.

"Will you ride back with us?" Miss Stirling asked, as Maynadier made his adieu.

"And have myself put down as rival to these young men," he said, with a smile.

"What do you care, since you are not."

"True enough, but the public would not believe it."

"The public believes what suits it."

"Just so, but it does not suit me that the public should have any cause to believe me smitten."

"You care for the public?" she said.

"Yes and no. No, where there is truth behind it; yes, when it is foundationless."

"You are frank," she said.

"Such was our compact."

"And is it, then, so great a disgrace to have it said you rode beside my carriage?"

"If they would stop with that, no; but they will not. I will ride beside your carriage any time, when you are alone; I will not jostle for a place with any one."

"Then you will never ride, I fear."

"I know it; I shall never ride."

She looked at him with an artless smile, that was the refinement of coquetry.

"I shall see you at the dance, to-night?" she asked.

"I shall be there."

"I have saved the third for you. You do not deserve it, but I saved it, none the less."

He bowed low. "Only the third?"

"Only the third," she said, as the coach rolled away.

"And what have you saved for me?" said Parkington, who overheard the last words.

"Whatever you like," she answered, "except the third."

"Then I take as many as I may; I want them all."

"You are modest," she said.

"You are the first that ever told me so."

"And am likely to be the last," she retorted.

"You said that you would give no dances before the ball," Captain Herford interposed.

"I did," she admitted; "but, then, I did not know of our guest from England. The dance I have given Mr. Maynadier, you may charge up to

the right that every woman has to change her mind."

He leaned down to the carriage door. "Change your mind for me," he said.

She appeared to ponder, as though undecided.

"Just one," he pleaded, "just one!"

"Just one, then," she said, with a captivating smile.

She turned to Parkington, who rode on the other side of the coach; as a guest, of course, he had the place without a struggle.

"How long are you from London?" she asked.

"Ten weeks."

"Who came out with you—any one of prominence?"

"No; mainly shop-keepers and the like—a most uninteresting lot."

"You must have had a pleasant ten weeks!" she laughed.

"I tried to make the best of it. Some amusement is to be got of a row of graven images, if one try hard enough; and, even a shop-keeper beats a graven image."

"Tell me of your shipwreck," said she.

"I have forgotten," he said; "forgotten everything but the salt water—I swallowed so much, I can taste it still."

"It shall be the business of Annapolis to obliterate the taste."

"It is obliterated, now," he said, bending down.

"Henceforth, Annapolis follows after London, with nothing whatever between—and you are Annapolis."

"Oh, no! I am not. I have nothing to do with Annapolis, other than as a guest."

"That should make you kind to the stranger."

"If the stranger be kind to me," she said, archly; then, before he could make answer, added: "Take supper with us, this evening. You can retire in time to change your clothes for the Ball."

"Gladly," he exclaimed, "gladly! Though, as to clothes, this suit will have to pass; Pinkney can get me no more for a day or two. Even this was a great favor."

"You should hope, sir, that the rest will be as becoming," she murmured, as the coach drew up.

"Good-bye," she said, waving her fan to Mr. Paca and Captain Herford and Mr. Worthington; "I will see you at the Ball, to-night."

And, giving Sir Edward her hand, they went up the steps, and into the mansion.

IV

THE MARBURYS

SIR EDWARD PARKINGTON slept late, the following morning. When he awoke, the sun was high above the Severn, and busy Annapolis was well into another day.

For a while, he lay and watched the golden light as it flickered through the leaves, now here, now there, frisking about on the carpet like a sprite.

"Well, Sir Edward, you are enjoying yourself," he said, with a bit of a smile. "You danced every dance, and you went in to supper with Miss Stirling. Every one, from the Governor down, did his best to entertain you, except that fool Herford, and he is jealous. I compliment you, sir, upon the favorable impression you have made. . . . But, where the devil, have I seen that fellow Maynadier, before? Somewhere, I am perfectly sure, but where?—where? And I cannot make out whether he recognized only something familiar about me, or whether he did not recognize me at all. At any rate, I hope it was the latter. Herford is one with whom I would best be careful—not for what he knows, but on general principles. He is in love with Miss Stirling, and cannot see she does not care a rap for him. With Maynadier, it is a casual interest, nothing more. He would not cross the street to make

sure of her. And, even if he knew I was a masquerader, I question whether he would do more than to warn me out of Maryland. With Herford, it is very different; he would proclaim me, from the State House, as an impostor and a thief—and all because of Mistress Martha Stirling! Well, for that I cannot blame him. She is marvelously pretty, and an arrant flirt. She cares no more for me than she does for Herford; but I can see it, and he cannot. The girl annoys me, too, with her self-complacency; she is so frank withal, and yet so alluring. I do not wonder that she has all the young men, of the town, bound to her chariot's wheels. She has started to bind me.—Good, we shall see who is bound, when the binding cease.”

He stretched, and yawned; then arose, dressed himself, and went down to the Coffee-house for breakfast.

“It’s a fine day, sir,” said Sparrow, as he took his order.

“Now that you draw my attention to it, I observe that it is a very fine day.” Then he laughed. “Sparrow, why is it that every innkeeper says the same thing to a guest—a fine day or a nasty day, as the case may be? It is neither informing nor original. Why, the devil, do you not get a new greeting?”

“I don’t know, sir—I don’t know. It is easy to say, and does not give offense. You are the first,

begging your pardon, sir, who ever found fault with it. I used the same in London."

"You come from London?" said Sir Edward, carelessly.

"Three years ago, on Saint Jamina's day last past. I remember I waited on you one night at the Golden Lion."

"Your memory is better than mine," looking at him more closely.

"Like enough—like enough, sir. It is much more natural that I should remember. I dare say, you did not so much as look at me."

Parkington shook his head.

"Who else was in the party?" he said.

"I did not know any of them, sir, you or any of the others. But I knew your face the moment I clapped eyes on it, last evening."

"Oh, I see," breathing easy, again.

His breakfast finished, Sir Edward paid his score, and was escorted to the door by Sparrow, who bowed him out.

For a little while, he watched the people, the tradesmen, mechanics and shopkeepers, who made Church Street and the dock below it the busiest place in America.

This was the business section. All trade was confined within its limits. There was no trespassing on Prince George Street, or King George, or Tabernacle, or Duke of Gloucester, or Charles, or North-East Streets; they were reserved for the aris-

tocracy. The land along them belonged to the Bordleys, the Collohans, the Ogles, and the Lloyds, the Pacas, the Brices and the Taskers, the two Charles Carrolls, the Worthingtons, the Hammonds and the Ridouts. They cared for no intrusion on their privacy; and, on occasion of a rout or ball at their town houses, they roped off the street in which it was located, to keep the common people out.

Presently, Parkington sauntered up Church Street to the Circle, and, attracted by a large placard which was posted on the church, he crossed to read it:

It was a notice by the wardens of the parish.

"All the laws of the Province and the English statutes relating to religious worship, particularly Section 14, Chapter 2, of First Elizabeth, oblige all persons not having a lawful excuse to resort to their parish church or chapel on every Sunday, and on other days ordained to be kept as holy days, and then and there to abide in decent manner during the time of common prayer, preaching or other services of God."

"Rather unusual," said young Mr. Brice's voice, behind him.

"I never saw its like before," said Parkington. "I thought Annapolis was a particularly religious town."

"I guess religion is all right; it is simply the observance of it that has gone to decay. Would

not you like to see our Courts in session? Come along."

They cut through School Street and came out on the Public Circle, in the centre of which stood the dilapidated State House.

"This building is a disgrace to the Colony," said Mr. Brice. "It is high time we were getting another."

"We have just as bad in London," said Parkington.

They entered by a hall and went into the court room, opposite to the door of which was the judge's seat, with the full length portrait of Queen Anne, presenting a charter to the City, high above it. Young Brice's father, John Brice, the Chief Justice of the Province, was presiding, in robes of scarlet faced with black velvet, and, as they entered, he was sentencing a man, convicted of manslaughter, to be branded in the hand with the letter M. Immediately after, another was called, who had been convicted of horse stealing, and sentenced to death.

"It seems to me," said Parkington, "that there is no justice in such punishments. There is too much difference in them."

"Horse stealing is a felony," said Mr. Brice; "and all felonies are punishable with death."

"I know. But why should you hang a man because he stole something? You hang a man for murder, you hang a man for theft; surely, the two crimes do not justify the same punishment."

"I think you are right, and that we will come to it in time. Indeed, I think my father is of the same opinion, though he has no power to change it. Listen to this case; the defendant has plead guilty."

"Mr. Prosecutor," said the judge, "let me have the indictment. John Farrin, stand up. You have plead guilty to as dastardly and cowardly a crime as I have ever known. You have disfigured your wife for life and, possibly, crippled her as well. You have cut off both her ears and one of her toes. I greatly regret that the law is such I cannot inflict adequate punishment upon you. I wish I could send you to prison for ten years. As it is, I will give you the limit. The sentence of the Court is, that you undergo a year's imprisonment, and then to find security for good behavior. Adjourn the Court until two o'clock."

Meanwhile, in the garden of the Governor's residence, Martha Stirling was entertaining visitors. Jane Falconer and Edith Tyler were her particular friends, and they had come over, from their homes on Prince George Street, to discuss the aftermath of the ball, on the previous night.

"Martha," said Miss Falconer, "I do not wonder that Captain Herford was jealous. The way you carried on with Sir Edward Parkington was really scandalous."

"And what was yours, my dear?"

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours," said Miss Stirling; "as I remember, you and Edith were with him just as much as I—or, perhaps, a *little* less."

Miss Tyler laughed. "A little less!" she said. "He danced with me but once. How many times did he favor you?"

"Oh, two or three."

"Indeed! Six or eight I should say, and nearer the latter than the former."

"That sounds like jealousy."

"Oh, no, it does not!" said Miss Tyler. "I care nothing for Sir Edward, beyond the fact that he is an agreeable partner. Indeed, I do not care enough to flirt with him."

"Nor I," said Miss Falconer.

"Well, girls, I am glad to hear you say so," Miss Stirling observed, "for I intend to flirt with him outrageously."

"Last night, for instance?" said Miss Tyler.

"Last night was only a beginning."

"So far as I observed," said Miss Falconer, "Sir Edward is ready to meet you more than half way."

Miss Stirling laughed. "Such was my observation, too. At the same time, I observed that young Mr. Marbury was exceedingly attentive," looking at Miss Tyler.

"To me, do you mean? Perhaps—but it has gone on so long as not to occasion comment. I am

sorry for George, a nice fellow but with impossible parents."

"Who are the Marburys?" said Miss Stirling.

"Nobodies," said Miss Tyler. "So far as I know, this is their history: Henry Marbury came out from England, as a Redemptioner. (They freed him in four years, with the usual allowance of a year's provision of corn, fifty acres of land; a gun, a pistol and ammunition. The land was in the neighborhood of Frederick Town, there, Marbury went, and his old master supposed that Annapolia had seen the last of him. But Marbury prospered; his fifty acres expanded into two hundred and fifty, and then, into a thousand, and, then, into five thousand. His personal property grew in proportion; he himself possessed Redemptioners and convict servants by the score. In short, he amassed great wealth. Then his thoughts turned back to Annapolia, he brought the family here, and installed them in a fine house on Duke of Gloucester Street. Since which time, he has struggled for recognition while he had not earned it for himself or wife, young George Marbury and his sister Judith are received and we all like them. They know their parents' limitations, but they were not ashamed to them, they are Marburys, without any claim to social recognition or regard. They have won it for themselves." said Miss Tyler.

"Just as our ancestors won it in the past?" asked Miss Falconer. "They may not have been

Redemptioners, but that was because there was no one here to buy them."

"Is not that a bit sweeping, Jane?" said Miss Tyler.

"Well, perhaps it is; but I know people in this Colony who forget their ancestors after a few generations."

"And so do I—and, since they wish them forgot, let us forget them."

"It is this about the Marburys—the old people, I mean—which I admire," said Miss Stirling: "they are perfectly natural. They may use some large words improperly, or fracture a canon of good taste, but they are genuine withal. They are not snobs. As for George Marbury and Judith, I have met none in Annapolis who are nicer. Young Mr. Marbury told me, last night, they are considering the entertaining of a large company at a country house, somewhere, which they have bought recently. He seemed a bit timid about it, rather fearful that those he asked might be averse to coming. I promptly said, if he and his sister should ask me, I would come."

"Oh! there will be no trouble on that score—we all will come," said Miss Falconer. "It is Hedgely Hall, over in St. Mary's County. The last Saxton died about two years ago, and it was sold to the Marburys by his executors. It is on the banks of the Patuxent, and as pretty a place as there is in the Colony."

"Exit the Saxtons, enter the Marburys," said Miss Tyler, sententiously.

"Why, Edith!" exclaimed Miss Falconer. "I never imagined you disliked the Marburys."

"And I do not," said Miss Tyler, "I do not; but it grieves me to see the old families dying out and the new ones coming in."

"Which being the case, however, and we unable to prevent it, what do you say to a row on the river?" Miss Stirling broke in.

They went down to the wharf at the foot of the garden. A word to the boat-master, and, presently, the Governor's barge shot out, manned by eight negroes, in the red and gray of his Excellency's colors. Miss Stirling bade the others aboard, and herself took the tiller.

"Straight away!" she ordered.

The blacks bent to their work, while the young ladies settled back among the cushions, under the awning, and gossiped. Presently, when the waves of the Bay began to roll, the barge was put about and headed up the Severn.

They were just opposite the Governor's grounds, when a boat, running with astonishing swiftness, rushed by them, a hundred yards away. It was an Indian canoe, fitted with a keel, two leg o' mutton sails and a jib, and seemed fairly to skim the water.

"George Marbury?" said Miss Stirling.

"It is," said Miss Tyler; "and that boat will be the death of him, yet."

"Wherefore?" asked Miss Stirling. "It seems to me to be uncommonly speedy in its movements to take me in it, sometimes."

"If you are in search of death, it were well to see it as swift—as swift and fast as any craft afloat, and, also, the most dangerous. The ease with which it can capsize is miraculous."

"Then he is handling it marvelously well!"

"He handles it as well as any man could possibly do, but that is not enough. Simply, gives him a little chance. Were he a poor sailor, he would not get twenty feet from the dock. Now, watch him; he is going to tack across our front. Let the wind veer, ever so little, and the chances are. . . . There, what did I tell you!" as, without a moment's warning, the canoe capsized. "Row for it, boys! row!"

They found Marbury holding to the canoe with one hand, while, with the other, he was endeavoring to support Sir Edward Parkington, who, in the overturning, had been struck on the head and rendered unconscious.

"It is nothing!" Marbury averred, when they were dragged aboard the barge. "Parkington has got a rap on the head, and he shipped a bit too much water, that's all. He will come out of it in a moment, if you women give him a chance—all he wants is air."

"What do you suppose he would have wanted, if

"We had not been close by when you expired?" inquired Miss Stirling. "I do not call upon to suppose," said Marbury, looking up, with a laugh, although his disheveled hair, "I am very well content to be." "And yet ought to be," said Miss Stirling, "to take Sir Edward out on such a crazy contraption."

"He said he could swim," Marbury protested. "He offered to lay me five pistoles, he could out-swim me across the Severn."

Just then Sir Edward opened his eyes, stared wildly around, and struggled weakly to arise.

"Where am I?" he gasped; "where am I?"

"In the Governor's barge," said Marbury. "Lie still."

Sir Edward's eyes closed; then, they opened again.

"I remember," he said, more strongly. "We overturned, and something struck me. What are we doing in the Governor's barge?"

"We picked you up," Miss Stirling answered. "We were fortunate enough to be close at hand."

Sir Edward tried to sit up; Martha Stirling sprang forward, and let him rest against her until they reached the wharf. Then, in the arms of two stout boatmen, he was borne ashore and up to the Governor's mansion. Here, he struggled to his feet.

“Put me down!” he said. “I have sufficiently recovered, and am, moreover, in no condition to present myself before his Excellency, or in such company. The ladies will accept, I know, my most grateful thanks and humble service, and permit me to retire, for the time. Wet clothes are most uncomfortable. I will to my lodgings. Mr. Marbury, your arm.”

V

HEDGELY HALL AND MARBURY, SENIOR

THE tale of the capsized canoe was at the Coffee-house, that evening, in advance of them. Among the young men, the opinion was that it was worth a wetting to be rescued by the Governor's niece and her companions. The older heads were not so sure; and some were for rating George Marbury, soundly, for exposing one, who could know nothing of the danger, to the perils of so hazardous a craft.

But Parkington, himself, soon set the matter right and took the burden on himself. He had gone, he said, fully warned of the risk, and accepted the result as his due—very much his due, since the overturning had been brought about by his own carelessness in shifting his weight. This, young Marbury had, of course, denied; and, there, it rested—though there were those who, considering the skill of the one, and the lack of it in the other, could place the responsibility, and, however it was, neither of them lost in public esteem by the incident.

The next few weeks passed quickly enough. Sir Edward was the guest, in turn, of every one in town, who pretended to gentility. He dined, among others, at the Carrolls', the Brices', the Ogles', and the Scotts'; he supped with the Worthingtons, the Ridouts, and the Bordleys; he attended a rout

at Daniel Dulany's, and an evening affair given for him by the Governor, where he was presented to the best that the Province could boast. Incidentally, he borrowed two hundred pounds from his Excellency.

He held his own as long as he could, and in quietude, drank moderately, and with judgment; he paid his share, always paid a bit besides; the clothes which Pinkney, the tailor, provided, while rich and fine were neither unduly expensive, nor noticeably ornate. Among a set of young men who were noted for the lavishness of their attire, his was modest and conservative. In short, among the men there was not a more popular man than he.

With the fair sex, he was discriminating and impartial in his attention. Naturally, as especially commended by Lord Baltimore to the good offices of his Excellency, these were bestowed in particular on the Governor's niece, and with that necessity could be found; otherwise they were weighed to the city. If he led Miss Falconer through the banquet, he contrived to show himself among Miss Tyler's most devoted; if he engaged to sit beside Miss Pica at dinner, he took care to see that the court was paid to Miss Jennings; and so, through the art, and, with such skill, that he had never been accused of doing it for interest or in any way made friends with them all, while he had to manage where others did the worst. In the last of the party, he saw the Marbury those party, and in

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bled at Hedgely Hall. They went by water, from Annapolis, in their host's own schooner, and landed directly at the plantation on the Patuxent River. There had been few declinations, and these only by men who were held in the Capital by business. The ladies included Miss Stirling, Miss Fordyce, Miss Tyler, Miss Jennings, the men, Sir Edward Parkington, Mr. Paca, Mr. Worthington, Mr. Constable, Captain Herford; in addition, the Platers, who had been recently married were to come from Sotterly, a short distance away, and the Snowdens from Montpelier.

Hedgely Hall was one of the handsomest places in Maryland. Rebuilt by John Hedgely, as a wedding gift to his bride, she had barely entered its doors when a fatal illness seized her and she died. He never married again, (though there were many damsels willing) and persisted in declining all office under the government. He had no town house, and rarely resorted to Annapolis. When he did, it was for a very brief time. He devoted himself to his estate, and lavished on it his care and affection. When he died, and his executors came to take account, it was discovered that he had also lavished on it most of his fortune. This, with the further fact that his next heir was a cousin in Virginia, with a plantation of his own, and nothing to make him abandon it in favor of an inheritance on the Patuxent, led to its sale.

And Henry Marbury, having the ready cash,

coupled with an ardent desire to acquire, became the purchaser. In justice to him, let it be understood, that he sought not to enter the great world. He bought it for his son, and a fitting place from which his daughter could be married. He hoped that she would marry above her class; he proposed that she should, if money could effect it; but he knew, in his shrewd, hard-headed way, that much of the success of his plans rested upon the girl herself. As for George, he looked to him to marry well and found a family. He himself was an outsider, and always would be. George was to be the first of the new line—the Marbury, of Hedgely Hall.

It is astonishing what the possession of a country-seat of known fame will make for gentility, even where one has small claim. And George Marbury and his sister Judith had the ways and appearance of the gentle-born. Somewhere, in the past, a forebear must have been of the class.

As for the Hall itself: the approach was by a great avenue, a hundred and twenty feet wide, lined on either side by tulip and poplar trees, that extended from the Patuxent, half a mile away. The house was of English brick, large and square, with wings which served for offices and bachelor quarters, the kitchen and the store rooms. A huge hall ran directly through it, with the drawing room on the right, the library and dining room on the left. The walls were of wood, panelled and done in

white, and covered with paintings and portraits (the latter, alas, not of the Marburys, but of Hedgelys dead and gone). The ceiling, doors, window-frames and mantels were carved in arabesque. Behind the dining-room, and opening from it, was a huge conservatory. Back of the house, or in front, if you choose, for these houses had no rear, was a long sweep of velvety lawn, dropping away in terrace on terrace, with hedges of box and privet, and beds of roses, lilies of the valley and lavender scattered among daffodils, heart's ease, cowslip and jonquils. Beyond lay the park, with great trees, reaching as far as the eye could see. Two thousand acres and more was the Hall's domain, of tobacco and wheat fields, meadow and orchard, all cultivated with a thoroughness which old Marbury had learned, in the lean years, when he was struggling upward to wealth.

As for old Marbury, himself, he was not exactly what Miss Tyler had termed, "impossible." *Difficult* was nearer the proper term. He was brusque of manner and sparing of words, and his ways were not engaging, but, underneath, was a kindly spirit and an honest heart. He would not have shone amid the wits of the Coffee-house (had he ever ventured there), nor did he at his own board, after the cloth was gone and the wine was on. And he knew it, and was silent—or, as was generally the case, he retired, and George took his place at the head of the table.

And, as old Marbury did, so did his wife. They were well mated. The affairs of the household, and the more onerous duties, she assumed and executed, the lighter graces were laid on Judith's shoulders. And, to their credit, be it said, that no host or hostess in Annapolis was more at ease, or had more of the *savoir faire*, and knew how to use it, than this son and daughter of the Redeptioner.

And, now, was their test:—asking guests for dinner or supper was vastly different from having them in the house for a week. This party marked their first appearance, in a social sense, among the landed families of the Province.

They had arrived at Hedgely Hall two hours before supper; the ladies retired to their rooms to rest, the men to whatever place pleased their fancy. It was a sultry day in May, when the first heat of the coming summer seems doubly warm.

Martha Stirling had been sitting by her window, which gave view of the garden and park, idly drumming on the sill, her thoughts of Sir Edward Parkington. She had seen much of him in the last few weeks. She was debating whether it was wise to see so much of him in the future. He was, to be sure, vouched for by Lord Baltimore, which might stand with the Governor and the men, but was not especially in his favor so far as the gentle sex was concerned. Not that there was the slightest ground for suspicion—on the contrary, his conduct had been most circumspect. But was it well to

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favor him when there were so many who sought her? For, with him at her side, there came a restraint upon the rest, a deference to the stranger of rank. She could not play him off against the others, nor them against him. She had tried it, many times, and always with the same result—failure. He either dominated the situation or else eliminated himself entirely. In either case, he was the victor—and a victor, seemingly, all unconscious of it. The man was tantalizingly fascinating. He could do everything well: fence, dance, play cards, make love, talk sense or nonsense. And with it all, he was handsome as the devil—and might be the devil, for all she knew—or the Governor knew. Why, they did not know even whether or not he was married!

She stopped, amazed. So far, as she was aware, no one had ever thought about it,—they had assumed that he was unmarried—and he had let them assume it. Was he a blackguard, or was he a gentleman? She paused, and, in her mind, ran back over the occurrences of the last few weeks. No, blackguard he was not. He had gone as far with her as with any one—farther, doubtless—and, despite a certain gallantry, he had not transgressed beyond the bound, even if he were married—and, surely, a little could be excused a man, travelling alone, in a foreign land.

She wondered if Mr. Paca knew, or Mr. Worthington, or George Marbury—or any of their party. She beat a tattoo on the window ledge and reflected.

—She would make it her business to ascertain. The more she thought of it, the more she wanted to know.

Just then she discerned Parkington, himself, emerging from among the trees of the park. He was coming slowly, his head on his breast, his walking stick trailing behind. Presently, he stopped, cast a quick glance toward the house, and, apparently seeing no one, crossed to the shadow of a bush and flung himself on the turf.

Instantly, Miss Stirling arose. She was dressed for the evening, but, womanlike, she cast a last look in the mirror, pressed both hands to her hair, took a final dash of perfume, and went down stairs and out. She was going to find out from him.

She was quite sure, indeed, it seemed the easiest thing in the world to ask him the simple question—until she came up to it—then, she was not so sure, nor did it appear so easy. In fact, it was distinctly not easy—it was to be approached gradually, and by indirection—and, may be, not to be arrived at that afternoon. It was not so simple a question: are you married?—at least, not when Sir Edward Parkington was concerned. He had a way about him that did not encourage familiarity; a certain set look of the mouth, a gleam of the eye—and the subject was pursued no further.

The turf deadened her footsteps, and she stood, for a moment, looking down upon him, before he

raised his eyes. Instantly, he was up and bowing low.

"Your pardon," he said; "I was dreaming; I did not hear you."

"Dreaming—of what?" she asked.

"Of nothing. Dreams that were without form or color."

"Can one dream nothing?" she inquired, knowing well he equivocated—there had been a frown on his face as she approached.

"One always dreams nothing—'such stuff as dreams are made of.' Moreover, the place and the hour impel it," and he swung his hand around him.

"It is a fine old place," she said, seeing he would shift the talk.

He nodded. "A fine place, though I should not call it old, at least, to us English."

"All things are relative; it is old to this country, which is new. Just as you are Sir Edward Parkington and a great man, *here*."

"While in England, you mean," he laughed, "I am only one of a vast number—an insignificant atom among the nobility."

"Yes—and I, that am not even noble, am, here, the toast of a Province."

"In which England joins!" with a bow.

"I was proving a proposition, sir, not seeking a compliment."

"It is proven," he said. "One will admit anything, grant anything, on such an afternoon as this,

and with such surroundings; I would give a man my last shilling, a woman—if she were pretty—my—my soul.”

“The usual way—the man would get something, the woman nothing. No woman wants your soul, even were it yours to give.”

“Or even if I had a soul,” he appended.

“Oh, no!” she said. “You do not get me to arguing on that topic. No one knows, so every one believes what his conscience dictates. I am orthodox, and go along with the Church. I do not care what you believe, and I do not want to know. So far as I am concerned, every one can take care of his own hereafter—he alone will have to pay penalty, if he is in error.”

He listened with a curious smile. “A bit advanced, my lady, for all your orthodoxy. You best not tell your views abroad.”

“My views are for myself, alone. We women are supposed to have none—to stay put, as it were—and I am going to stay put; but I shall think what I please.” She shrugged her shoulders, and laughed. “Goodness! what turned the talk to religion—neither of us has any to speak of.”

“And, hence, we may safely discuss it without offense to either—it is believers only who are intolerants.”

She held up her hands in protest. “No more, I thank you. Let us find a pleasanter topic. . . .

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I heard you were leaving us very soon—for Philadelphia. Is it so?"

"This is the first I knew of it. Who told you?"

She affected to think. "I, really, cannot remember. Some one, in Annapolis, but who it was I do not know."

"Because it interested you so little."

"No—because I thought you would have told me, were it true. Yet, why should you not be moving on—one does not visit America to see only one place?"

"No, I suppose not; I must move on, sometime, but I am in no haste, I assure you. I came to America, intending to loiter indefinitely." There was a queer smile on his face. He was thinking of his father's parting admonition.

She did not observe the smile—and it would have conveyed nothing to her if she had. She was occupied with his words. "Intending to loiter indefinitely" did not smack of a wife, left behind in England—unless—unless the wife were the cause of his indefinite loiter.

"You have a complaisant family," she remarked.

"Yes!" he said, and laughed; "yes, I have a very complaisant family." Then he abruptly changed the subject.—"Shall we walk in the park, or do you prefer the esplanade—or shall we walk, at all?"

"The esplanade, by all means," she said, not

daring to venture an immediate return to the subject.

For it was evident that he had deliberately veered, and, as she had assumed to treat him, hitherto, as unmarried, she might not, now, shift her attitude without just cause. And she had no cause—not even a suspicion that was based on anything. Moreover, for her to question it, now, would be inexcusable, and, if she were wrong, would cause a break in their friendship. And that she was not prepared to chance. In fact, at the present moment, she did not know whether she preferred Sir Edward Parkington or Richard Maynadier. The one was a great catch and a charming man, but he was an American—and, besides, was not sufficiently responsive to her charms; the other was a Britisher, but, she feared, was not for her, who could bring no fortune with her.

She stole a glance at her companion. He was slowly plucking to pieces a rose.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Testing *your* affection:—love me, love me not; love me—shall I continue.”

“Pray do,” she said; “I am curious to know the answer.”

“It is undecided, then?” banteringly.

“Yes—sometimes I do, and sometimes I do not, and sometimes—I am in a state of equipoise. Let the rose tell what it is, at present.”

“Nay: if you are not constant, the message has

no merit—begone!” and he tossed the flower from him. “Ho, fellow!” to a man in servant’s clothes, who was passing at a little distance, “I forgot my walking-stick; you will find it by yonder bush—fetch it.”

The man glanced up, hesitated the fraction of a second, then a smile passed over his face, and he acquiesced.

“Very well, sir,” he answered, and went on.

The voice was deep and full, as of one accustomed to giving orders rather than receiving them.

Miss Stirling stopped, stared—and, then, went swiftly in pursuit. Parkington watched her in surprise.

“Mr. Marbury!” she called. “Mr. Marbury!”

The tall figure, in osnaburg breeches and shirt, heavy shoes and coarse worsted stockings, swung around, and laughed.

“I trust you are well, Miss Stirling,” he said—“Oh,” as she began to explain for Sir Edward—“it is not the first time I have been taken for one of my own servants, and besides I come by it honestly. The feathers made the birds, Miss.—Sir Edward Parkington, I presume; I have heard my son speak of you,” and he held out a hand that bore all the evidences of toil and hardship, and that was, distinctly, not the hand of a gentleman.

“I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Marbury,” said Parkington. “This is——

“But you did not expect to meet me in such

clothes, hey?" with a quiet little chuckle. "Well, you see, I'm more at home in them. You were saying that this is——"

"A magnificent place—quite the finest I have seen in America."

It was a particular happy speech. Next to his son and daughter, Hedgely Hall was his pride.

"That it is, sir, that it is!" he exclaimed. "There is none finer to the Northward, and few to the Southward—except it be Westover, or Shirley, and one or two in South Carolina—at least, so my ship captains tell me; I have never seen them for myself. It will be a fine estate for George—Marbury of Hedgely Hall is better than a Marbury of Frederick-Town. Make yourself at home, sir, make yourself at home. Supper is at seven o'clock. I must get out of these clothes before then—the family doesn't like 'em. I will send your stick after you, sir."

"I beg of you, Mr. Marbury, not to bother!" Parkington exclaimed. "It can wait until——"

But a wave of the hand was the only answer, as he passed out of hearing up the avenue. The other looked after him thoughtfully.

"So, that is Marbury, the elder!" he said. "I think I want to see more of him—a very interesting character." He turned to Miss Stirling, and swept her his most profound bow. "Your pardon, mademoiselle! shall we continue the walk?"

VI

THE MISTAKE

At supper, that evening, every one sat where he wished. They went in without regard to precedence, and Sir Edward found himself between Miss Tyler and Miss Marbury, the latter taking the place of her mother, who was indisposed.

Old Marbury was at the head of the table. He had changed his servant's apparel for a quiet suit of black, his iron gray hair was unpowdered and unbagged, but was tied at his neck with a narrow ribbon. His greeting to the guests had been purely formal; and, now, he cut and served the roast ham in silence, and passed the plates to Joshua, the negro butler. He, in turn, passed them on to an assistant, who carried them to the opposite end of the table, where Miss Judith presided over the fried chicken. There was hot bread of various sorts, preserves, pickles, and two kinds of sweets, all placed on the table; in addition, there was tea and coffee, and great pitchers of milk on the side table.

As for servants, there were five, beside Joshua, to wait; he did nothing but stand behind the master's chair and oversee. And sorry was the negro who failed to anticipate the wants of a guest—old Joshua's eye detected it, and he reckoned, later, with the culprit. He was a belonging

of the Hedgelys, taken with the place and well befitting it. Marbury had bought him, with the goods and chattels of the deceased owner—just as he had bought hundreds of others—at the market price. Only, Joshua's price was higher than the others.

He had remained as butler; no one thought of supplanting him, and, so far as his domain extended, things were done as the Hedgelys had done them. Indeed, he even persisted in wearing the green and gold of his late owner; and old Marbury, after a moment's hesitation, had given him his way, and had taken over the Hedgely colors, as well as the Hedgely estate. And, in time, he was allowed full sway about the place, for he knew what, and when, and how, and the Marburys did not. Marbury himself was too occupied to learn, even if he could, Mrs. Marbury was content to leave such things to the children, and George and Judith, seeing that the old slave was competent and faithful, did not interfere.

It had been a sore trial for Joshua, this serving of the Redemptioner, where hitherto a Hedgely had ruled,—all in the colony knew what Henry Marbury had been and whence he came—but there was no alternative. Well was it for him, that the new master had not seen fit to put another in his place, and him into the tobacco fields. And, at first, the service had been unwilling and grudgingly (not publicly, but at heart—he knew too well the punish-

ment that awaited the shirking servant). But, as the days passed, and he saw that Marbury was given to silence, and that to Miss Judith and Mr. George were left the control of the house, he regained his spirits, and came to serve them even as he did the old master.

The Marburys could never forget the Hedgelys, however. They sat under their portraits at meal time and in the drawing room, their arms shone on the china and the silver. Many would have banished the portraits, got new china, and had the escutcheon removed from the silver. They would have torn down everything that reminded of their newness. Not so with Marbury. He let them remain, nay, rather he conserved them. Marbury is new, he said, all Maryland knows it, therefore preserve what the Hedgelys left. The more we exalt the latter, the better for us. If we do not allow them to be forgotten, we shall gain in the estimation of the old families, whose good opinion it is worth while to have. Get all the benefit of their reflected glory, it is an asset of their estate which you have purchased, you are entitled to it, and, if not neglected, it will yield good returns.

And he was not mistaken. It soon became known that the Marburys were making no effort to suppress the past. They would not change the name of the estate, all the old servants were to be retained, all the old customs followed, even the silver and china were preserved, the portraits on the walls.

The Hall was as the Hedgelys had left it—and more:—it was better cultivated, and better administered, and better kept. Society, at first hostile to the new family, gradually grew quiescent—it would wait and see. It could never accept Henry Marbury (as he well knew); but, as for the next generation? They had the money, would they acquire the *savoir faire*.

Henry Marbury understood what was in society's mind. His answer was to buy a home in Annapolis—but he never obtruded himself. He was a liberal subscriber to the church and to the lotteries, and whatever he won in the latter was given to the former. God save him!

Meanwhile, George was sent to King William's School, where he met all the sons of the aristocracy, and, having stood the test, was received as one of them. Judith was given a private tutor, a maid, and a coach; and, somehow, she too came, eventually, to know the sisters of the boys her brother knew. The rest was easy:—money—enough money not to spoil them, and make them undesirable companions.

And it won—as it always will, where position depends on a campaign well managed, and an engaging personality.

All this, Sir Edward had heard, by dribs, at the Coffee-house and elsewhere. He had been curious to meet the man who had planned it, and had seen it through, effacing himself that it might succeed.

For that it had succeeded the present gathering guaranteed. George and Judith Marbury were in society, and safely in; thereafter, it depended on themselves whether they would stay in. The next thing was marriage. Sir Edward's glance passed slowly around the table. Yes, they would any of them do, any one in the Colony, in fact. George Marbury was undoubtedly handsome, of a fine figure, tall and supple, with an air about him which ordinarily comes only from generations of ancestors. And Judith had a certain ease and stateliness of bearing, which was the feminine counterpart of her brother's.

He let his eyes rest covertly on her. Broken in fortune, with no money save what he made, *he* might have married her, and helped conserve the Marbury fortune—might have learned to oversee a tobacco plantation, to raise wheat, to trade in slaves and bond-servants. In short, he might have led a respectable life, here, in Maryland, and settled down as a thrifty and sedate landed proprietor. That is, assuming that the girl would have him, and the silent figure, at the head of the table, offered no serious opposition.

He saw his mistake, now. He should have held to his own name, and the little money he had. As he might not return to England, he should have announced that he had come to America to settle, to grow up with the country. Instead, he had stolen another man's name and title, had set himself

up to impersonate him, had used his letters of introduction, had been received, and was, at that very moment, to all intents and purposes, Sir Edward Parkington.

It was too late, now, to retract. He had burned his bridges behind him. He was known the province over, nay into Virginia and Pennsylvania, too; for he had met representative men from both Colonies at the races, and they had made much of him—the traveller for pleasure. To admit, now, that he was not Parkington, but, instead, a disinherited son, with a few pounds to his credit and no character, would be worse than folly—it would be madness. What of his story of shipwreck—how came he by the letters of introduction—did Parkington die by the waves or by murder? Assuredly, he had made a mess of it. . . .

Of course—of course, he could marry the girl, or make a try for her, still masquerading as Sir Edward, and trust to luck, and the Marbury money to find a way out. The main objection to this scheme was that, for all he knew, Parkington was already married, and while he might purloin his reception and welcome, yet to cause him to commit bigamy, was a little too much risk. Naturally, since he himself was unmarried, there would be no bigamy, but to espouse a woman—a good woman—under another man's name! even he balked.

He had played the bachelor thus far, and he hoped it was according to the fact; at least, no one

had questioned it, to his knowledge. But, this afternoon, he thought he had detected some such purpose in Miss Stirling's manner—a faint doubting. He had led quickly away, and she had made no attempt to return to it. Possibly, he had been mistaken—it might well be that he was. But, at all events, the question confronted him, and doubtless would have to be answered, sometime. He was——

“Is anything the matter with the chicken, Sir Edward!”

The last words caught his ears. “I beg your pardon, Miss Marbury,” he said; “did you ask me a question?”

“I asked whether anything was the matter with the chicken?” she replied; “you have been frowning at your plate, for at least a minute—or is it the ham?”

“Was I frowning?” he laughed; “well, rest assured it was not at either the chicken or the ham—they are delicious. I suppose it is very impolite, but my thoughts had gone back to England and——” he made an expressive gesture. “Amid the most delightful surroundings, home will suddenly obtrude. I promise not to offend again.”

“’Twas a grievous offense,” she smiled,—“particularly for a traveller—an omen that we shall soon lose you. *N’est ce pas, monsieur?*”

“It is not, assuredly not. I have no thought of departing. On the contrary, I have but begun

to enjoy my stay. I may become a Marylander, yet, who knows?"

The smile rippled into a laugh. "You flatter us too much, Sir Edward—oh! too much!"

"I flatter not at all—I mean it."

"Is this a sudden notion—I thought you travelled for your pleasure?"

"And so I do—solely, for my pleasure. Perchance, my pleasure is to remain—I do not know."

She refused to take him seriously. "Have you advised your friends in England of this new idea?"

He shook his head. "You are the first to know it."

"Because the idea was, this moment, born?"

"You do not believe me."

"You do not believe, yourself."

"But you would receive me?"

"Assuredly, we would receive you—we would do more, we would welcome you."

"Then I warn you that I may remain."

"What nonsense!" she exclaimed. "A London gentleman come here to live—settle down to the humdrum life of a Colonist!"

"There may be compensations."

"What compensations?"

"Leading a quiet existence, for one thing."

"No need to cross the Atlantic for that," she said. "You can lead a quiet existence on your country estate—stay away from London."

"The social life is very charming," he continued.

"Granted—for Maryland, but only a miniature of the life you have at home."

"And your women," he went on, "your women are fascinating."

"Some men are so gallant!"

"*Peste!*" he said, "you will not be convinced—not even that I should have a good excuse for staying."

"No good excuse, *in comparison*, with what you would be losing—and" (very sweetly) "I take you to be a gentleman of excellent judgment."

"What are you two quarreling about—what will Miss Marbury not be convinced of?" Miss Tyler broke in.

"That your Maryland has anything to offer a man—a man who had lived all his life in England," said Parkington.

"It would depend much on the man."

Sir Edward nodded. "Suppose we were discussing myself.

"You? oh, la!" and went into a gale of laughter.

"Evidently you are not convinced," Parkington observed.

"Surely, you are not serious?" she demanded.

"Not if every one is as enthusiastic as Miss Tyler and Miss Marbury," said Parkington, with affected indignation.

Captain Herford, across the table, had been attracted by the merriment; now he broke in.

"I say, what is the enthusiasm—what is it?"

"The ebullitions of a quiet spirit," said Parkington, quickly.

"Oh, is that all?" Herford rejoined. "I thought, from Miss Tyler's quiet laugh, that it was the ebullitions of a ghost."

"You were not asked to think anything about it," Miss Tyler retorted. "Stay on your own side of the table, will you?"

"Bravo!" cried Parkington. "Come again, Captain Herford, come again!"

Herford shook his head. "The lady is in a bit of a temper. I best wait until the storm subsides," he said, and turned away indifferently.

"There is something about that man which always gets on my nerves," Miss Tyler remarked, lowering her voice. "I do not know what it is, and I reckon I should not let it affect me, but it does."

"Cultivate the placid disposition," Miss Marbury recommended.

"Oh, that is very well for you to say, but it is not easy to do. You have not any nerves,—you would not get excited if the house were burning."

"Do not try me, I beg of you!" laughed Judith. "I would be sure to carry down all the pillows, and to throw the chinaware out the second story windows."

"Well, I only wish I had your placidity—not to be always on edge. There is nothing the matter with Captain Herford, I suppose; I just take him wrong.—I always have. But, frankly, Judith, he

is not to my liking—though I should not say it to you, the hostess.”

Judith Marbury made a little motion of indifference. “Say anything you like, my dear; he is George’s guest, not mine.”

“You do not like him, either?”

“I neither like nor dislike him—I am totally indifferent.”

“But you are always nice to him!—however, you are always nice to every one. Has he ever tried to make love to you?”

“Oh, yes! he has tried it with all the girls. At present, he is mad about Martha Stirling.”

“Half the men of the Province are mad about her—and with just cause, too, I grant. But they will get over it—the minute the ship, that bears her back to England, passes Greenbury Point.”

“You think that none of them could persuade her to remain?”

“It is as unlikely as that Sir Edward himself will remain.”

“Governor Sharpe has bought Whitehall;”—Miss Marbury objected—“he will become one of us when his term expires.”

“But his niece will not,” said Miss Tyler. “He seeks rest and ease, she pleasure and excitement.”

“I can find plenty of pleasure and excitement in Maryland.”

“And so can I—but not of the sort she would have. It is all in what you have been used to.

Maryland is agreeable enough for a few months, but she will want something else for steady diet. She has beauty and fascination, and they bring a higher price in England than in America."

"Is the lady, then, for sale?" inquired Parkington.

"We all are for sale, the only question is the price you pay."

"Edith!" exclaimed Miss Marbury—"where, in Heaven's name, did you get such notions?"

"Here in Maryland—every girl prefers a man with money or prominence—you do, I do, we all do. Unless he has one or the other, he is not even considered as a *possible* husband—isn't it so!"

"No—at least, I think, I am not for sale. Does love play no part in the compact?"

"As you wish—you can love him or not. Given a rich or prominent suitor, and one possessing neither, which would you love, think you?"

"All things being equal otherwise?"

"Not necessarily—the poor one may be much the better looking—and of a more amiable disposition."

"I cannot answer," said Miss Marbury; "I would have to see them to choose—wealth and prominence are in one's favor, but so also is a handsome person and an amiable disposition—and then, after all, I fancy, I should let love decide."

"But if you love neither?"

"Then, I reckon, I should marry neither," Miss Marbury answered.

"Well, you for it!" said Miss Tyler, with a shrug, "but, for my part, love has nothing to do with it. And if it has, it is quite as easy to love the rich man as poor man, and much more sensible in the end."

"In effect, you would sell yourself for money?"

"And you would sell yourself for love; it is all the same—only, your consideration rarely lasts: the man makes no effort to keep it. It is different with money, vastly different."

"I fear we are making a poor impression on Sir Edward," said Miss Marbury. "He will think you mercenary, and me a sentimentalist."

"He flung the bone—he is responsible!" Miss Tyler laughed.

"I did," said he—"and I was vastly entertained. Shall I fling another?"

"Not this evening, my good sir," said Miss Tyler. "Perhaps you will decide the vexed question for us—mercenary or sentimentalist?"

"Never, oh, never! Pray excuse me! Ladies, I beg of you——"

"It would serve you right if we did not," Miss Marbury broke in. "Have a piece of chicken?"

"Yes, yes! Two pieces, if you wish—I'll eat anything rather than decide between you!" he averred.

"Then, no more bones, m'sieur."

"No, no more bones," warned Miss Tyler.

"Oh! may we tell that you are thinking of settling in Maryland?"

"Lord! no!" Then, when they both laughed, he added: "I do not want to raise the ladies' hopes too high—I might not remain, you know." (Which is as good as saying I am not married—without saying it, he reflected.)

Herford had been trying to overhear their talk, and, now, a sudden lull, around the table, afforded him the opportunity.

"What is that?" he called out. "Thinking of settling in Maryland—do they mean you, Sir Edward?"

"No!" replied Parkington, instantly. "We were speaking of the Devil—and wondering, if he were to settle here, how long he would escape inquisitive questions. May be you can answer."

It was said smilingly, and apparently with the best spirit, but none who heard it missed the sting. And in Herford's face a faint color came, and his eyes snapped.

"It would depend on how it pleased him to masquerade," he retorted; "some disguises are, you know, more effective than others, but I should say he would be most successful as an English gentleman."

Sir Edward's smile broadened into a laugh, and the rest of the table, seeing that he took it so, joined in.

“You score!” he answered, when the merriment had subsided.

But Herford, instead of meeting the acknowledgment half way with a quick declination, gave a supercilious shrug and a lift of the eyebrows, and turned away. Whereby, he lost all the advantage, and proved himself a prig; whereas Sir Edward was marked as well-bred, and the impropriety of his original retort was forgotten. Furthermore, it had served to pass over Herford’s query, and to make the table forget it—and that was Parkington’s main concern. He supposed it would come out—it was not likely Miss Marbury or Miss Tyler could keep silent—but he preferred that it should not be told to the whole company, in his presence.

VII

SIR EDWARD LAYS PLANS

SIR EDWARD PARKINGTON lay awake, for a long time that night, thinking. It was good sport, this posing as another man, and he had entered upon it much as he had entered upon all his escapades, for the fun of it—and the amusement of seeing himself received and accorded the welcome belonging to some one else. 8

And he had enjoyed it thoroughly, until yesterday. Then, the question suddenly presented itself!—if you are going to remain in America, how is this thing to end? What are you to be, when it is over—for it cannot last forever; it is sure to be found out; some one, who knew Sir Edward, in the flesh, or who knows you, will come upon you, and the truth will out. He might masquerade for a year, or two years even, scarcely longer—and, then, again, he might be detected, at any moment. He had not thought of the hazard—of the punishment that awaited when he assumed the impersonation. He saw only how easy it would be—a dead man, his letters, and the thing was done. But, once done, it was not so easy to undo it. The only way, was for Sir Edward Parkington to die a second time, and finally—and his body not be found. And that would necessitate his disappear-

ance—to a sufficiently distant city where his name and figure were not known: Boston—New York—Charleston.

He had heard of Charleston, as a particularly nice town—after Annapolis, the best in America. Of New York, he knew but little; of Boston, still less. Moreover, he preferred the warmth of the South, and the people, there, were said to be very hospitable. He had never heard that of New York, and he had a distinct recollection that Boston was reputed a most inhospitable town. Yes, he would choose Charleston—it was farther removed from the ways of travel, more isolated. There, he could put off his borrowed plumes and stand forth as his true self, and no one would be the wiser. He would leave Annapolis as Sir Edward Parkington, bound for Philadelphia. He would reach there another man; and the first ship which left that port, Southward-bound, would have him for a passenger. Yes, decidedly, it was the best way—when the time came for him to leave Annapolis.

There was no need for haste—he had the whole summer before him. It was not likely he would be found out before the late Autumn; it took a vessel nine weeks to make the voyage across. He had taken a strong liking for this Maryland, and her people, and the life they led. He thought he would like to lead it with them.

And this Marbury business was the right idea—if he had only come in his proper person. Well,

he had not, and it behooved him to make the best of it. Barring accidents, there was small chance of the impersonation being detected before October, and much could be accomplished in the interim. At least, he would have a good time, and the explanations could wait. . . .

Yes, he would consider marriage with Judith Marbury, very seriously. She was good style, despite her birth, and her face and figure were much above the average. In fact, they were downright handsome—handsomer than any of the ladies he had met, except Miss Stirling—and Miss Stirling had no money—and was going back to England. . . .

Of course, Miss Marbury might not take him for a husband—but that would develop later. He could make a flying start, at any rate. And he did not know whether he wanted her for wife; that, also, would develop later. All he knew now was, that the Marbury fortune was ample, and that Miss Marbury went with the fortune, in the nature of an additional prize.

He lay in the high tester-bed, with its flowered curtains draped around it, looking through the window at the moonlight on the trees and turf, and glinting on the distant river. The other men of the party were remitted to the bachelor quarters and had to double up. He was the special guest, and, as such, was given the main chamber, and permitted to occupy it alone. It was accorded to him, naturally, as his due, and he had not objected,

though he would have preferred being with the other young fellows in the wing. None of them, he noted, appeared to have intentions respecting Judith Marbury, and, consequently, he had a clear field. Besides, it would have given him the opportunity to get nearer to them, and, if they so wished, to instruct them in the art of cards.

He had, it is true, borrowed two hundred pounds from the Governor, which would be ample for some time, but if he intended to remain, even for a few months, he must pay it back in due season. If, however, he intended to stay only a short while, and then disappear, the paying back would be superfluous. Never pay anything, even if you have the money, was his rule of conduct; and, for long, he had been subsisting by it, and other people's credulity. It amounted to his father's credulity in the end, for he had been the one to always pay finally.

But his father had grown tired, at length, and a felony resulted, of which he was the victim. Then, to escape the debtors' prison on one hand, and prosecution, with but one end, on the other, he took his sire's money and advice, and under an assumed name departed, one fine night, for the Colonies. This name he again exchanged for Sir Edward Parkington in a manner heretofore noted. It had seemed very amusing at the time, but, now, he did not know what to do with it. . . .

He could not remain in Maryland (as he had, sud-

denly, decided he would like to do) under it; he could not well court Miss Marbury under it; assuredly, he could not marry her under it (he was not quite graceless enough for that)—he could do nothing under it, except to stay a short time and, then, depart and disappear. And he could not lay it aside without an explanation—and that, with the shipwreck, the letters, and the dead man would likely put him in jail. . . . It was the very devil of a mess—and, the more he thought of it, the bigger mess it became. . . . Well, at any rate, it would do no harm to sit up to old Marbury, and try to win his good opinion. And, with this final idea in his mind, Sir Edward dropped asleep.

But his sleep was fitful and broken; when the clock on the landing chimed six, he arose, shaved and dressed himself, and went down stairs.

The servants were about, but none else, and, after wandering aimlessly through the house, he sauntered out on the front piazza. He could hear the song of the slaves from a distant tobacco field, the sharp order of some overseer, the call of the sailors, on the Patuxent, and the whistle of the boatswain's pipe. He would go down to the river; a fine pathway, a splendid avenue of trees, and an early May morning going to waste, he might as well make use of them until breakfast.

He arrived in time to see the schooner, which had brought them from Annapolis, hoist anchor and sail away down the river. A man, who was standing

on the dock giving orders, faced about and came toward him; he recognized old Marbury—in his servant's clothes.

"You are up betimes, Sir Edward," he called, heartily.

"I but honor the morning and the place," said Parkington. "Though, I confess, if I had not been wakeful, I likely would not have honored them for another hour."

The other nodded. "I dare say—you are not of the early risers by birth, and you have no occasion to learn by experience, as I have."

"I suppose we miss the best time of the day."

"Trash, all trash! you miss an hour or two that may be bright, but it is no brighter than the rest of a bright day—and if it happens to be dismal, it is the dimmest hour of the day. I am up mainly because I'm accustomed to it—it would not be natural for me to sleep late—I cannot do it."

"You get better work out of the men by it?" Parkington asked.

"Yes, oh, yes! There is nothing like the master's presence, or the possibility of it, to accomplish results."

And when Sir Edward smiled, he went on: "You think I have not broken my son to my way of doing? Very true. There is no need—he will not have to labor as I have done, the way is easy for him. It has ceased to be the custom for the master to be up with his slaves. Times change, and people

change with them. I have made the money—it will be George's work to live up to it, and to retain it."

"Much the easier part," commented Parkington.

"I'm not so sure," said Marbury. "Every man to his calling. I could not live up to it—in the aristocratic way, that is; I think George can. But, in doing it requires ability to retain it. Here is the uncertainty."

"It is safe so long as you live," Parkington observed.

"May be it is," was the answer, with a grim sort of smile; "but I look further ahead. You have heard my history?"

Sir Edward hesitated an instant: "Yes," he said, "I have heard it, as the Coffee-house knows it."

The other's smile broadened, lighting up his face and eyes, and wiping out their gaunt severity.

"The Coffee-house knows that I am a Redemptioner," he said—"that I served my five years—that, when my time of service was ended, I took my provision and went to Frederick—that I acquired some little wealth—that, six years ago, I came to Annapolis, and two years ago I bought this place. It was a rare stroke, buying this place! You have doubtless heard some other gossip, part true, part untrue. But what you have not heard, because none in the Colony knows it, is that my father came of a good family in England. He was wild and foolish, his people cut him adrift, disin-

herited him. Our name is changed; I shall never claim the relationship. Under the new name I have prospered; it has served for my children; they are received in society. I have made my own way. I owe nothing to my immediate ancestors. I am the founder of my line. My son will have a goodly inheritance—my daughter an ample patrimony. I am satisfied.” He stopped, and looked at Parkington, curiously: “Strange!” he said, “strange! that I should tell you this! I do not know whether it is because you are an English knight—or something about you which makes us seem akin (begging your pardon, sir, I mean in sympathy not in blood). It is the first time I have spoken of it—you will oblige me, by forgetting it.”

Parkington inclined his head in acquiescence.

“It is forgotten,” he said. “And it may be, there are more points of sympathy between us than you imagine. As it seems to me, in this new land, the aristocracy is one of wealth and culture, or culture and wealth, whichever way it come. You have provided the wealth, your son and daughter the culture.”

“There is one thing more needed to make it secure,” said Marbury:—“Marriage into the old families. When that is done, I am ready to die.”

“You are ready to live, you mean.”

“I mean what I said. Old Mr. Brewster was my master. When my time of service was ended, he sent for me. ‘Here, Marbury, are the things

which the law compels me to give you,' he said. 'Take them. I understand you are going to Frederick. Stay there!—you may make some money, I fancy you will, but, don't imagine yourself any better, if you do. Don't come to Annapolis and attempt to get into society, as some Redemptioners have done—and failed. You don't belong, and we won't have you. You have been my servant, you can never be our equal.' I thanked him and departed, resolved to come back. That resolution has never faltered. But there was truth in what he said. I have been a servant, I can never be the equal of those who knew me as a servant. With my son and daughter it is different. They have to do with another generation, they never were servants—and," (with a smile) "they have the means of propitiation. They are far beyond me—my usefulness to them is ended, more, I am a positive hindrance. So, I would be content to go."

"Man! man! you're morbid!" exclaimed Parkington.—"How old are you?"

"Sixty, last month."

"Many men, at your age, have only started to live. Let the young ones go their ways—the next generation will take them, fast enough. You prefer a quiet existence—very well, have it; it will not interfere with them. You have been living to yourself so long, with but one idea, that you have become obsessed by it. Live now for your own enjoyment—forget all else."

"When a man has lived his life for a single end, and, at sixty, has seen that end attained, there is not time to start with a new one. I am not morbid—on the contrary, I am supremely happy to have accomplished my life's aim, or nearly it. If I were convinced that my death is necessary to perfect success, I would be willing to die. That is what I mean, sir—that is what I hold to."

"And that is why you have won out!" exclaimed Parkington. "You contemplated only success, never failure."

"No, I never thought of failure," said Marbury; "it was not in the problem."

There was silence for a time. Presently, the Englishman spoke.

"Since you have honored me, thus far," he said, "I am, I hope, committing no impropriety if I ask one question."

"Ask on, sir," replied Marbury, "I have told you what I have told no other—it will do no harm to tell you something more."

"You spoke of marriage," said Parkington. "Has anything been—arranged, as to either?"

"If you mean, have I picked out a mate for either?—no. And I think that they have not picked for themselves."

"Miss Marbury is a particularly fine girl—she should have suitors in plenty."

Marbury did not answer.

"And young Mr. Marbury, as the future master

of Hedgely Hall, if for nothing else, is a most desirable *parti*—and he is a mighty good fellow, besides.”

“I think I can trust them,” said Marbury, quietly. “They may take their own time.”

And Parkington, fearing that he had gone a bit too far, made haste to change the subject.

Marbury was a queer man, one of the peculiar temperament, likely, which, having no confidants and no intimates, will suddenly tell a life’s secrets to a casual acquaintance, and then repent it forever after. True, he had not told him much that he could not have heard, any time, at the Coffee-house, but that made small difference. It was the telling which he would regret, the burst of confidence, that was foreign to his nature—and for which he was likely to hold Parkington responsible, or, at least, to distrust him, hereafter.

And this did not chime with Parkington’s idea. If he were going to pay court to the daughter, with any notion of matrimony, it were well not to have the father’s ill will, especially, when it involved such a confession as he would have to make.

So he turned the talk into less personal channels—of the yield of tobacco, the manner of curing and packing it, the custom duties, and the varying prices which it brought in London. Marbury talked freely and interestingly. It was his life’s work, and no man in the Province was more conversant with the subject and all its ramifications. He had

grown tobacco, as servant and master, for thirty-five years; he could tell to a pound what his yields had been every year, what it had netted after the inspection duties were collected, and what his profits were. By the Act of Assembly, passed only three years before, tobacco was the staple currency of Maryland—every officer, from Governor down through the list, was paid in it, as were the clergy, and all large commercial transactions were conducted in warehouse receipts for inspected tobacco—in fact, no tobacco could be sold unless inspected and passed.

Parkington was not especially interested in tobacco, but he pretended to be, and it served his purpose admirably. Marbury seemed to forget his indiscretion of a short time ago, and, when they came to the house, he was still talking on tobacco.

“Take me out to the fields, sometime,” said Parkington, “and show me more about it—of the cultivation, I mean.”

“I will be glad to, sir, very glad, indeed. You will excuse me, now, I must dress for breakfast.”

Parkington sauntered to a nearby bench and sat down. He was not quite satisfied with the result of his early morning walk—he was not so sure it would not have been better to decline Marbury’s confidences. It might have been difficult to do, and it might have offended him, but, it would have been wiser, in the end. The offense could not have lasted, and, after the moment, Marbury would

thank him for it. As it was, he would likely hold it in mind. It was only human nature. Of course, his being an Englishman and a foreigner might prevent, but that was scarcely possible. His one chance was to regain Marbury's confidence by showing great interest in the plantation, and all that concerned it. Good—he would show it. . . .

He glanced up, to see Captain Herford coming toward him.

"The top of the morning, to you, Captain," he said; "I hope I see you well."

"I do not know how you see me," said the other, shortly. "It depends on your eyesight."

"And that tells me," said Parkington, indifferently amused, "that you are out of sorts. Better go down to the river and take a cold bath—there is nothing like a cold bath, Herford, to put one in tune with the morning."

"You have tried it, I apprehend," ironically.

"No, there was no need—I am always in tune."

"And, hence, particularly able to look after those of us who are not," Herford sneered. "Has it ever occurred to you that it is a bit gratuitous?"

"Yes!" said Parkington, and laughed. "That is why I never do, unless they inflict themselves upon me. In plain words, Herford, get in a good humor or get away. You intrude on my privacy—and the least you can do is to be pleasant.—Your face, at present, does not harmonize with the landscape—it spoils the picture. Pray, withdraw it!"

The other looked at him, sourly, uncertain for the moment how to take him—then a surly smile overspread his face.

"The picture brightens!" exclaimed Parkington. "Let it grow, let it grow!"

"Damn these black servants!" the Captain broke out.—"Laid out my gray suit instead of the dark blue, as I ordered, and was not around when I got up."

"You have got on the blue, I observe."

"Yes—got it out myself; and he got my riding whip. They are all worthless, sir, damn worthless!"

"I dare say they are—but think of the satisfaction in being able to beat them. You work off your surplus feelings, and at no loss to yourself. A slave dare not leave you."

Herford stared at him. "He is not *my* slave," he said; "he is one of old Marbury's."

"Oh! and yet you beat him?"

"Certainly—you beat any slave who disobeys orders."

"Is that the general practice?" Parkington inquired.

"The general practice is to do as you wish with them," the other answered, sharply.

"But suppose Marbury should not care to have his slaves beaten—what then?"

"Then he has no business to assign one to me for a servant. Oh, it is all understood—and, what

is more, he will get another trouncing, if I mention it to the Marburys."

Parkington nodded. "I see," he said; "you have a way, here, we, of the old country, do not understand."

"You would understand it quick enough, if you lived here."

"And do you not ever try to manage them with kindness—do you whip them for every offense?"

Herford shrugged his shoulders. "Thank God! I do not own any—but, if I did——"

Parkington smiled. "I take it, that the disposition to beat them is in the inverse ratio to the number owned."

"What?"

"I mean, that the more slaves one owns the less disposed he is to have them whipped. You, who confess to possessing none, are very ready to beat them all."

"Are you trying to pick a quarrel with me?" the Captain, demanded angrily.

"There you go, spoiling the picture again!" Sir Edward laughed. "I shall have to ask you to take your face—ah! here comes one who, assuredly, will not spoil the picture. *Bon jour, mademoiselle!*" he called, springing up and going forward.

"What are you two men doing?" said Miss Stirling.—"Why, Captain Herford, what ails you? your face is as glum as the Lord Chancellor's."

"It will be so no longer," Herford answered.

"Even the Lord Chancellor's would reflect the presence of such a luminary."

She knitted her brows, as though perplexed. "By which, I infer, you mean, I am a luminary. Is that complimentary?"

"It is—at least, it was so intended."

"How very nice!" she exclaimed. "Your compliments are so delicate, oftentimes go over my head—a lovely view, Sir Edward!" turning toward him.

"Charming—charming!" said he, looking straight at her.

"I mean, there!" (pointing to the landscape).

"Just what I was trying to impress on Captain Herford——"

"Trying?" she echoed;—"surely, it took no trying."

"I am sorry to say it did—in fact, he steadily refused to see it."

She turned and looked, curiously, at Herford.

"All of which means, that he is out of sorts," she said. "Well, I decline to talk to a man who is out of humor on such a day. When you are willing to smile, and mean it, you may come back. Au revoir, sir, au revoir."

VIII

THE MEANING OF A SREUG

IN the late afternoon, the Snowdens arrived from Montpelier, and, a little later, the Platers from Sotterly. They were young married people and added much to the company. Mrs. Snowden was a Leigh of Virginia, and Mrs. Plater was the only daughter and heiress of Colonel John Rousby, of Rousby Hall in Calvert County.

The former came down the Patuxent in their barge, rowed by a dozen sturdy blacks; the Platers by coach and four, with postilions and footmen, and made a gallant show as they dashed up the avenue and drew up, with a grand flourish, before the entrance.

The company was on the lawn, at the side of the house, playing at bowls or idling the day away as they saw fit, but they crowded forward, and made a great to do over them.

"I vow I am almost dead," said Mrs. Plater, at last; "pray, get me away, Judith, or I shall faint. The roads are terrific, and the jolting has well nigh finished me."

"You poor dear!" exclaimed Miss Marbury, and straightway carried her off to her room.

Miss Stirling was not in the company that received the Snowdens and the Platers. She saw them come, from behind the curtains of her window, but did not show herself. She was in *déshabillé*, which

was sufficient excuse, and she was engaged in writing a letter, which was abundant excuse—more especially, as it was of exceeding length and filled with gossip.

It was to Lady Catherwood, in London, and essayed to relate all that had happened since she left, and besought her to reply, in kind. Much of it had to do with the men she had met, less, with the women—though they came in for a share. Mr. Worthington, Mr. Paca, Mr. Brice, and Mr. Constable she found most agreeable and charming, Captain Herford was mainly a bore, though, at times, he could be most entertaining. He was a good catch, as he was reputed to be wealthy, and, in addition, was an officer in the Royal American Regiment. He had conceived a most absurd fondness for herself, however; which was most embarrassing, because he did not want to give any of the other men a chance to be nice to her. She did not care to snub him, on her uncle's account, but it was pretty hard, sometimes, not to do it.

There was one man, who had attracted her more than all the others—indeed, she could grow very fond of him, if he would only respond in the slightest degree. Mr. Richard Maynadier was his name. He was considerable older, was, in fact, a member of the Council and a man of material importance in the Colony. She had done everything to attract him, consistent with maidenly reserve—and, may be, a bit more; and he knew it, too, and laughed her, good naturedly, aside. He was courteous, of

course, in the very best way, but steadily refused to be brought nearer. And it piqued her. To have all the men devoted, except the one she desired! It was not at all serious, but, mainly, because *he* would not have it. In fact, if there was any one in Maryland who might persuade her to remain, it was Richard Maynadier.

At the end, she wrote this postscript—which was the real object of the letter:

“ P. S. Did you ever Chance to Meet a Sir Edward Parkington, or do you Know of Him? He is arrived, lately, at Annapolis, bringing Letters of Introduction to Governor Sharpe and Mr. Dulany. He tells a wondrous story of Shipwreck, and being cast up by the waves, some miles below here, and All on board being lost, Save only him. He is exceedingly Affable, and pleasant, and has made a Good Impression on Every one. I wish you would Ascertain—if you do not already know—whether he is Married—his actions are those of a Bachelor, but no one has Inquired, and I care not to ask him. He has the loveliest Manners, he dances the Minuet with Marvelous Grace, and he can make love better than any Man I ever Met. He says he is going to stay the Summer. He is Tall and slender, with black hair, blue eyes and fair complexion. Be sure to tell me, when you Answer—and anything else you know concerning him.

“ M. S.”

"I wish I had written three weeks ago," she reflected. "It will require nine or ten weeks for this letter to reach England, and as many coming back, and, allowing for the necessary delay at both ends and the time she takes to reply, it will be all of five months and, maybe, six, before I can hope for an answer. That will be the first of November, at least—and, like enough, you will be gone before, then, Sir Edward," she said, looking out at the man standing in the group on the lawn below her.

She folded the letter carefully, and affixed the seals, then laid it aside, to be sent to Annapolis and included in his Excellency's mail for forwarding. In that way, she would save postage, and as the missive was several ounces in weight, at five shillings the ounce, it made purely friendly communications rather expensive.

It was nearly supper-time when she appeared on the lawn, looking exceedingly sweet in a flowered pink silk, to find a new arrival—Mr. Richard Maynardier. He had ridden across from his place, Rose Hill, which adjoined Hedgely Hall on the North.

"Ah, Miss Stirling!" he said, with a low bow. "The evening star shines pale beside you."

"And the morning star not at all!" she laughed. "Thanks, monsieur, my warmest thanks.—But I wonder that you are not afraid to pay me compliments."

"No," he said. "Compliments are safe—they lead to nothing."

"Because they are mainly false?" she asked.

"Not exactly—because they do not commit one, I should say—and every one takes them at their value; there is no danger of being misunderstood."

"You are dreadfully afraid of being misunderstood!" she mocked.

"Perhaps!" he smiled. "What these young macaronies" (with a motion, indicating those around him) "could venture with impunity, we older heads dare not. It is not dignified for us."

"Then do not ever fall in love, Mr. Maynadier; love is the most undignified of all our frailties."

"In what way is it undignified?" he asked.

"In every way—particularly, in the exhibition of one's feelings. Every one makes sport of the lover—every one laughs at him."

"Then the world is overrun with fools—for they are but laughing at themselves. No, no, my lady! I find no fault with love, ever—only with him who simulates it, and is old enough to know better. *Comprenez vous?*"

"Oh, yes, I understand," she said, with a frank smile; "but I do not agree with you."

"A woman's privilege! she never agrees, and is fascinating always."

"Perversity, you think?"

"Diversity!" he laughed, and bowed himself away.

At supper, a little later, he occupied a place beside Miss Marbury. Parkington was at the opposite end of the table, one removed from the silent

host, whom he was trying, as best he could, to bring into the conversation, but with indifferent success. A word, a nod, a short sentence, rarely, was all that he could elicit. But even Maynadier could not have got as much out of him—and he watched them, contemplatively, through the meal

What was the man's idea—what was his purpose? What was there about him to make old Marbury talk—why was he taking the trouble to make him talk? In short, had he an object in it? But, then, why was he in Maryland at all? What was he doing here? Was he a spy—a secret agent, sent hither for a purpose; and what was that purpose? He came duly accredited, and his letters were in form and regular—the signature, indeed, the entire writing, was Lord Baltimore's own. . . . It was very peculiar, surely. Of course, the Governor knew—he would have been informed—but the Governor had seen fit to be silent, and even they, of the Council, did not pry in matters which did not concern them—his Excellency had a way about him that forbade it.

He had met Sir Edward Parkington in London, two years before, and this was not he. But he had seen Colonel Sharpe, at the Races, introduced him as Sir Edward, and so, a little later, when he himself was presented by Miss Stirling, he had accepted it. The man knew how to act the part—indeed, he appeared to be far above the calibre of Parkington. Parkington, as he remembered, was pretty much of a rake—one of Baltimore's own. But

this man had been very circumspect, and his deportment most proper. . . . He might be a great noble—his manner suggested it—come over incog. to view the country, and to get information at first hand on the temper of the people. Indeed, he might be anything and any one—but, assuredly, he was *not* Sir Edward Parkington. However, it was not his business to unmask him, after Colonel Sharpe had accepted him and vouched for him.

“Why did you shrug your shoulders?” Miss Marbury asked, suddenly.

“Did I shrug my shoulders?” he said. “I did not know it.”

“Yes, you did; now why did you do it?”

“I do not know.”

“Which is another way of saying, I should not have asked.”

“You may ask me anything,” he said.

“And not give offense, you mean,” she supplemented. “But you reserve the right to answer only what you choose.”

“Do you think so?” smiling.

“Yes, I do.—Please tell me, Dick?” she plead.

“Please tell you what?” he said, indulgently.

“Why you shrugged your shoulders—you were looking toward father—has he done anything—I mean, was he the cause?”

“No, child, he had nothing to do with it.”

“You are not deceiving me?”

“Have I ever deceived you?” he asked.

“No! no!” she said. “I did not mean it—but

I thought that, maybe, he had—you understand.”

“I understand that you are unnecessarily sensitive,” he answered. “Your father is a bit eccentric, but he is neither churlish nor ill-mannered—and he is rich enough to be both, if he so wished.”

“You believe in wealth, then?” she asked.
“You believe that wealth is equal to birth?”

“In a social sense, yes,” said he. “Both are the keys to good society.—By birth one belongs, by wealth one buys a right to belong. It is all the same. For my part, I would rather be the wealthy buyer than the poor believer—it is so much more satisfactory.”

“But when one has both wealth and birth—like you,” she persisted, “how do the buyers appear—what do you think of them?”

He leaned close over. “Just what they are worth,” he answered—“just what they are worth.”

“And what are we worth, Dick?” she said impulsively; “we are buyers—what are we worth?”

“As a general proposition,” laying his hand on her arm, and speaking very earnestly, “the Marburys are worth exactly what they measure. You, my dear, have measured up, far up.”

She looked at him with searching eyes. “You mean it—you are sure you mean it?”

“Sure—absolutely sure!”

She gave a little sigh of relief. “You are very good—I am satisfied now—if you approve, there will be none who dare disapprove.”

"There will be none who care to disapprove," he said. "Yours was a more difficult case than George's—he had only the men to satisfy, and that is easy, where one is a good fellow and a manly. You had the women—and women are jealous, vindictive and irresponsible. But you won. They all are for you—there is not one that is even undecided."

"I am glad, very glad," she said. "I want to please them—I was afraid I had failed. You are a dear to tell me this—a perfect dear, Dick."

The sweet unaffectedness was refreshing. It is not possible, he thought, that the girl does not know she is beautiful. One look in her mirror would tell her, one glance at her figure—her complexion, her eyes, her hair—oh! assuredly, she must know it.

He had seen it coming, had seen it grow. Six years ago, when they first came to Annapolis, he had marked her—the young girl just budding into womanhood. He had been of those who early accepted the Marburys, and four years later, when Hedgely Hall was offered for sale, the fact that his place adjoined it, was, he knew, a consideration for its purchase. Since then, he had watched the woman beside him perfect into the beauty of to-day—with all the winsomeness, all the freshness, of the unspoiled and unaffected. He had seen it as none other, for he had a place in the household which was for him alone—he was guide and mentor

and elder brother to her, all in one. The parents were not capable, at times, of advising, so he took the duty on himself—not that she needed much counsel, but, when she did, she knew where to find it. It was at his own request that she had come to call him “Dick,” dropping the Mr. Maynadier, as quite too formal, and evading Richard “because that was what all his other friends called him.” He was so much older,—later, he had liked the intimacy of it, the spirit of comradeship—to-night, he had suddenly realized that, even to him, she was no longer the sweet-faced girl, whom he had petted, and chided, and advised, by turns. She was able to stand alone, to be made love to—and had been these many months! . . . Yet none had sought her, as a lover seeks! And, why? Was it because of her birth? Was it because of him—the friend? Was it because of herself—would she have none of them?—

“What is the matter, Dick?” she said, “why do you not answer? Your eyes are on me, but your mind is far away.”

“I beg your pardon!” he exclaimed, “it was rude, I know—what did you say?”

“I asked why it was you shrugged your shoulders—why was it?”

“I was cold—it is drafty here.”

“Nonsense!—be serious——”

“I cannot. I am——”

"Dick, you are possessed!" she laughed. "You are——"

"I am," he cut in—"I am possessed of shrugs—they come and go as they will—I am not responsible—I am——"

"You are trying to avoid telling me—confess it."

"Now, Judith——"

"Do you not see, Dick, that you have aroused my curiosity to an ungovernable pitch. You must tell me—and now—now—now!"

He threw up his hands in mock despair.

"But suppose I cannot," he said.

"Cannot?" she echoed—"You do not appear to have lost the power of speech."

"*Touché!*" he laughed. "*May*, would be the better word—I may not tell."

"Why?" she said—"why may you not tell?"

"Because it is inexpedient," he answered.

"A matter of State?" she demanded.

"No."

"Violating a confidence?"

"No."

"Inexpedient!" she reflected—"Inexpedient!—there can be but one more reason:—it might provoke scandal, if known. Is that it?"

"You are the very devil, Judith!" he exclaimed;—"yes, that is it."

"Oh, delightful! delightful! Come, sir, what is it? Now, I will not be put off."

He looked at her doubtfully, undecided what to do. He thought he could trust her—he felt sure that he could. But, what if she babbled?

“You do not trust me,” she said. “You fear that I shall tell.”

“No, not exactly,” he said, “I trust *you*, but I fear that, *inadvertently*, you might tell.—However, you shall know it.”

She turned toward him, impulsively——

“But, not now—some one might overhear. Take me for a walk down the avenue, after supper.”

“Would you rather not tell?” she asked. “Because, if you would——”

“How like a woman!” he laughed. “Work one up to the pitch, and then grow faint-hearted. No, you will have to hear it, now—and be bored.”

“There is no danger,” she replied.—“I’ll take you the walk, after supper—and I’ll take you whether you tell me, or whether you do not.” And she gave him a deliberate and dazzling smile—which set Mr. Richard Maynadier to thinking more than ever.

A little later, when, the supper ended and her duties as hostess were done for the time, she came out on the lawn, it was to find Richard Maynadier seated alone and waiting. He arose at once and bowed, and, without further ado she slipped her hand through his arm, and they strolled down the avenue toward the water. The full moon had just pushed its way through the fringe of trees beyond

the Patuxent; the breath of the evening came to them, the fragrance of the roses and the lilacs, a gentle breeze sang softly through the leaves, and whispered among the branches.

A faint laugh floated to them, and then another—and, presently, up the avenue, strolled Miss Stirling and Sir Edward Parkington.

"Ah! what have we here?" exclaimed Miss Stirling. "Another couple!"

"Going out into the moonlight," said Maynadier, quickly, "*not into the dark.*"

"Ho, ho!" Sir Edward laughed, "what have you to say now, my lady?"

"That he is most impertinent."

"Granted," returned Maynadier. "What else?"

"Nothing, now," came over her shoulder; "I shall consider the penalty."

"What did she mean by 'the penalty'?" Judith asked, when they were out of hearing.

"I have not the slightest notion," said he.

"Has she caught you, too,—I mean, have you joined the others in dancing attendance on her?"

"Not to my knowledge," he smiled—"and, I am sure, not to hers."

"Well, you are about the only one who has escaped—you and George. And George is too busy with every one to specialize—just yet."

"Give him his head," said Maynadier; "he will settle into his stride, some day."

"If he does not settle pretty soon, father will have the fainting sickness. He bought Hedgely Hall for George's wedding gift—and he still has it on his hands, with no prospects. However, no match is much better than a bad one."

"George will never make a bad marriage, trust him for that—and trust your father, too."

"Trust father!" she exclaimed. "I reckon I do—he is the dearest parent any girl ever had. I was only trying to be funny, and without success—even with you. It is not in me."

"The trouble is with *me*—I took you seriously——"

"They all do—every body takes me seriously. They will not let me be absurd, even when I try."

He looked at her with a puzzled frown—was she in jest or earnest? At all events, she was showing a new side to him, to-night—or he was seeing it, for the first time——

Her light laugh broke in on him. "Confess that you do not understand me, to-night!—Well, I do not understand myself, so, let us drop me, and take up the secret—the great secret you were afraid some one would overhear, at table:—why did you shrug your shoulders, sir?"

"The specific reason is of no value," he answered, "it simply fitted in with my thoughts, at the time. But the secret itself is very different. It may result in nothing, that is, nothing may come of it (which I doubt), but assuredly it is a fact."

"Bravo!" she cried. "You do it well, Dick, splendidly, indeed. You almost convince me you have discovered something."

"Discovered conveys the idea of going in search of," he said, thoughtfully.—"No, I did not discover this—it was thrust upon me. I just noticed it, casually. I——"

"Dick, do get on!" she exclaimed. "You've got me all on edge. Out with it!"

He chuckled softly to himself. "You know Sir Edward Parkington?"

"Casually—he is a guest, at present, at Hedgely Hall," as though she were imparting information of the most confidential sort.

"Oh, no, he is not!"

"Do be serious, Dick—what about him?"

"You thought you passed him, a moment ago, with Miss Stirling, did you not?"

"Of course!"

"Well, that shows how easy it is to be deceived. You did not."

"Are you crazy, Dick? Certainly it was Sir Edward."

He shook his head.

"Who was it, then?" she demanded.

"I do not know—I only know it was ~~not~~ Sir Edward. He is not he!"

She stared at him.

"He is not he!" she repeated. "What *do* you mean?"

"I mean," he said, the smile broadening into a gentle laugh, "that the man you know as Sir Edward Parkington is *not* Sir Edward Parkington. He is an impostor."

"Dick!" she cried. "Do you mean it—are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure," he answered, "perfectly sure."

"But I do not understand—he brought letters to Governor Sharpe and Mr. Dulany. Were they forged?"

"No, they were genuine enough."

"Then what——"

"That is just the difficulty. I do not know anything more than this: the man who presented them is *not* Parkington."

"And how do you know it?"

"I met Parkington, in London, two years ago——"

"And this man is not he?"

"Exactly. I saw him several times; he seemed to be interested in the Colonies. He was a small man—very much inclined to stoutness. Oh, I cannot possibly be mistaken. I detected the imposture the moment I met him."

"And that was when?" she asked.

"At the Annapolis races, the day subsequent to his arrival."

"And you have permitted him to masquerade—to be received by your friends—to enter their houses?—Oh, Dick!"

"Your criticism may be just," he said. "And I be wrong in my surmise. The fellow may be a rogue—but, somehow, I doubt it. In manners, and bearing, and address he is far superior to the real Sir Edward—and, also, in breeding, if I am any judge. If this be true, then he is of superior birth. Now, why should such a man be here, in disguise, and with his letters apparently regular. I do not know—but they do queer things in London. Besides, the Governor has accepted him. He must have been informed—and, if so, it is not for me to tear off the mask."

"But if he be an impostor—if he has stolen the letters, and the name?"

"That is scarcely probable; at any rate, I have given him the benefit of the doubt, and, thus far, he has deported himself perfectly—much better than Parkington could have done. For my part, I believe he is sent here for a purpose and is, in rank, very much above the one he personates."

She nodded her head, gravely.

"You know best," she said; "but, now, if ever you want to unmask him, you must lie. It would sound very well, indeed, for Richard Maynadier to say: 'I knew him, at once, for an impostor, but I let him fool you for a month (or two months, or three months, as the case may be), before I told.'"

"And for that very reason, I shall not tell," said he. "I am not my brother's keeper. I will

look out for myself, and my friends, if need be, the rest may protect themselves, as best they can."

"Are the Marburys your friends?" she asked.

"Have the Marburys needed my protection, yet?"

"There is an impostor a guest in their house."

"My dear girl, you assume he is an impostor for personal gain—I, that he is an impostor for purposes of State. I would receive him as a guest at Rose Hill."

"You are warned—we were *not*."

"Whom his Excellency sponsors, a citizen may entertain without discredit."

"I reckon you are right," she agreed, after a moment's thought. "The Governor vouches for him, and that is sufficient. But, all the same, it gives me a queer sort of feeling to be in the same house with—Sir Edward."

"You see, it would have been much better not to tell you—but you are so persistent!" and he laughed.

They had come out into the open moonlight, on the river bank. She looked at him with an odd smile.

"Yes, I am," she replied. "But it has not had much success, thus far."

And though Maynadier besought her earnestly, she would not explain.

IX

THE SURPRISE

THE next few days were uneventful. Richard Maynadier, after staying until midnight, rode home, sober and sedate, with his body-servant, a fruitless effort of the men to keep him, by other means than simple persuasion, having failed. Equally futile had been Miss Stirling's politic allurements, and George Marbury's importunities.

Sir Edward Parkington had spent a number of hours with Judith Marbury, and was rather well pleased with them. Not that he had ventured on anything personal,—he was far too old a bird—but inferences from actions may be drawn, and he thought that she was not altogether dense. Enough, for the present, if she gathered that he had shown a slight partiality for her society. Let her get persuaded of that fact, before he proceeded further. He had all the summer before him, and the matter could be worked out, in that time—if it was to be worked out at all.

He had, also, paid due attention to the father. He had inspected his tobacco fields—had watched the slaves and servants at work—had listened to a minute description of the manner of curing and hogs-heading—in fine, had the whole industry expounded to him. And, with it all, he had been

careful to show a quiet enthusiasm that did much to set right the indiscretion of the other morning. He wanted to relieve Marbury's mind of all distrust, and he took the very best means to accomplish it:—he evinced an interest in the other's work, and he grew confidential himself.

"I have not told any one, not even Colonel Sharpe," he said, as they were riding in from the fields, "the real object in my coming to America. I am thinking of settling here. Do not repeat it, please.—Yes, I know I can trust you, else I should not have spoken. I shall look around, and pick out a likely place, and if the price is not excessive, and if some other like matters can be arranged, I am about ready to become one of you."

"Maryland should be proud to welcome you!" Marbury exclaimed.

"Well, there are other ways of looking at it," said Parkington laughing. "Some people may say that I should be glad to come to Maryland. But that is neither here nor there; if the old residents will receive me, and let me be one of them, it is quite enough."

"There will be no trouble on that score—they will be glad enough to take you in!"

"That is very good of you," (including, by the "you," Marbury among the old residents), "I shall try to make a companionable neighbor. I wonder if there are any estates, in this part of the country, for sale—or which could be purchased for a reason—

able amount. I like this section—it is a little farther South than Annapolis, and, besides, seems more fertile—better adapted for tobacco.”

“It is, sir!—it is quite equal to Virginia.—And, speaking of places, you might get Rousby Hall, one of the finest we have. You have not seen it?”

“No, I have seen no place but this one—and it, I suppose, is not in the market.”

Old Marbury shook his head, decisively.

“Not at any price!” he said. “But Rousby Hall has a woman for the heiress—she is here, now, young Mrs. Plater. Colonel Rousby, her father, might be willing to sell it, for a good price, and pass his winters in Annapolis, and his summers with his daughter, at Sotterly. . . . I do not know any other that could be had—Maynadier’s is out of the question—and Plater’s, and Fitzhugh’s, and Snowden’s, and Bladen’s, and Ridgely’s—no, Rousby Hall is the only one.—Do you wish to see it?”

“Yes—sometime before we leave here—just a glance. I would not wish to appear, yet, you understand—not until my affairs are more definitely arranged.”

“Very well,” said Marbury. “Any help I can give is yours for the asking. Meanwhile, I can ascertain whether Colonel Rousby would consider selling.”

“Yes—it would be very kind,” said Parkington, as he dismounted. “Meanwhile, not a word.”

"Hum-m!" thought Marbury. "I shall not be the one to tell it. . . . Going to settle here—maybe! He is not married—I wonder if Judith might take a fancy to him. . . . Hum-m! . . . She will have a very good sized dowry, and an Englishman does not despise such things. . . . Well, we shall see. . . . Hum-m!" And he went on to the wharf.

And Parkington, watching him ride down the avenue, was thinking.

"Let that idea sink in, Marbury. Sir Edward Parkington is considering settling here—and marrying—with your permission and a fitting competence. But Rousby Hall? There is not money enough won across the card tables, in all Maryland, to buy it,—and I have no other source of revenue. . . . I reckon, the girl herself will be sufficient; if I can win her, I will be content. Afterward, with father's generosity, we can consider Rousby Hall. And the girl is a beauty—ah, here she comes!—God, what a figure!"

"Whither away, Sir Edward?" she asked, seeing that he wore riding boots.

"No whither," he said. "I have just returned—your father and I were inspecting the fields."

"You are a guest after his own heart!" she laughed. "Are you really interested, or is it chargeable to good manners?"

"I am really interested—and one can learn much from your father."

"Yes, that they can," she said enthusiastically. "None in the Colony is better qualified from actual experience."

"And experience is what I want," he said. "You would not believe me, the other evening, that I am thinking seriously of making Maryland my home."

"Of course, not!" she answered.

"But I am in earnest," he insisted.

She looked at him, a moment, in silence. What was the meaning of this move. What could be its object. That he intended to remain, she never for a moment believed, but, why pretend? Here was a problem too difficult for her to solve—she would have to tell Maynadier.

"I ask you, however, not to disclose it, for the present," he continued. "I want to look around a bit—and pick out a place, and—you understand."

"No, I do not understand," she replied, implying much more than she conveyed; "but, if you wish, I shall hold it confidential until you release me—I fancy the notion will not linger overlong."

"Mademoiselle still doubts?" he smiled.

"Monsieur still plays on my credulity."

"You will see!"

"I shall be very glad to see!" she laughed, (meaning the end of his masquerade).

"What—my staying or my leaving?"

"Whatever is for the best," she evaded.

"Rather enigmatic!" he said. "Do you mean, the best for me, or the best for the Colony?"

"They should be identical—the best for the Colony should be the best for you."

"In theory, possibly, but not always in practice. The best thing for me may be to stay, but it may be the worst for the Colony."

"That can be determined only by trial," she said.

"In the meantime, what do you think it will be?"

"Which brings us back to the starting point!" he laughed. "We have rounded the circle. I think it will be that I stay."

"Then, I hope it will prove pleasant and profitable."

"And you will stand my friend?" he asked.

"What makes you think I shall not?" she said, evasively.

"Nothing—I only wanted to have your promise safely filed away."

"I fancy every one will be glad to be your friend, Sir Edward,"—(smiling) "so long as you deserve it."

"So long as I deserve it," he repeated, with a laugh. "Do you think the time may come when they will deem it well to give me their backs?"

"Not at all!" she replied. "I would have said the same to any one—under similar circumstances."

His eyes studied her—he did not miss the qualifying phrase, but he took it to apply to him as an Englishman.

"If all my Annapolis acquaintances are as glad to have me one of them, as you are," he remarked, "my welcome will not turn my head."

"Are you in search of flattery, or do you honestly want what I think?"

"What you think; by all means, what you think," he said.

"Well, you have it—you cannot persuade me, that one of Sir Edward Parkington's standing, in London, can ever voluntarily become a Colonist. If he does, there must be a cause—and a cause means——"

"What, mademoiselle?"

She shrugged her pretty shoulders, "I do not know, monsieur; but I have a woman's intuition, and it tells me——"

"Yes," he said, "tells you what?"

She looked at him with a quizzical smile.

"That Sir Edward Parkington will never settle in the Colonies," she replied.

He thought of the dead man, in the grave by the seashore, near St. Mary's.

"Sir Edward is quite content with his present abode," he said, and laughed.

"Yes, for a time," thinking he referred to Hedgely Hall.

"For all time, and eternity, too."

"Am I to take that as compliment?" she asked.

"Not as a compliment—as the simple truth,"

he answered, very seriously,—too seriously, indeed, for it did not ring quite true, and she detected it.

“I fear that you equivocate,” she cried. “You mean something which you do not say.”

“I protest——”

“Be careful, lest you protest too much, Sir Edward.”

“You are unjust,” he declared—“what other meaning could I have?”

Again the shoulders did duty. “I am a poor guesser of motives—particularly, when they do not concern me,” she answered.

“Unkind, unkind!” he cried—then they both laughed.

“Let us go in to breakfast,” she said.

They were turning away, when the clatter of a galloping horse, attracted them, and up the avenue, at full speed, came Henry Marbury.

“Why, it is father!” she exclaimed—“what can be the matter? he is waving to us—what does he mean?”

“Stay here, I will meet him,” said Parkington, and hurried down the steps.

At the same time, a negro groom ran out from the stables, and stood ready to take the horse.

“Go in! Go in! Close the house!” Marbury cried—“close the house, quick!—quick!”

“What?” shouted Parkington, the pounding of the hoofs drowning the words. “What do you say?”

"Close the house! quick!—quick!"

"Close the house! quick!" Parkington repeated to Judith.

A moment later, Marbury dashed up, flung the reins from him, and leaped down.

"Pirates!" he shouted. "Pirates!—they are coming!" pointing behind him—where, five hundred yards away, and barely distinguishable among the trees, a crowd of men were approaching on the run.

"Pirates!" said Parkington, incredulously. "Surely not!"

"Then, stay and welcome them, if you think so," called Marbury, rushing up the steps.

Parkington stayed long enough to get another view of the nearing men, then followed him.

Within, he found both order and confusion. The guests were just about to assemble for breakfast—some were down stairs, some about to come down, others just finishing their toilet. Marbury was standing in the hall giving orders to the blacks, who were frightened but still retained sufficient sense to do as they were told. Mr. Paca, Captain Herford, and the other men were closing the shutters on the lower floor, the women those on the floor above. Already the pirates had sent a detachment around to the rear of the house, keeping under cover of the stables, and escape for the women, by horseback, was cut off. George Marbury had managed to send a servant off, an instant before, however, to apprise the nearest plantations of their plight—

and begging that they muster all the assistance in their power and hasten to the rescue.

Parkington looked on, for an instant, then, seeing Constable come from the library with a gun, he hastened in, took one from the rack, and returned to the front of the house. Old Marbury was standing in the doorway. The main body of the freebooters had halted a hundred yards away, while the leaders were taking council and observing the place. There could be no doubt, even at that distance, what they were—their variegated costumes and strange headgear proclaimed the riffraff of all lands. Cutlasses, daggers, swords, and pistols, were their weapons—none of them appeared to have a gun; they were wont to come quickly to close quarters, and, then, to show no mercy.

“Are pirates plentiful along this coast, Mr. Marbury?” inquired Sir Edward.

“Plentiful! I’ve never heard of a pirate on the inner Chesapeake.”

“Well, they appear to be there, now!” Parkington laughed.

Marbury stared at him, “Man alive!” he said. “You don’t seem to appreciate your danger.”

“My danger is nothing,” remarked Parkington, measuring the powder and ramming home the charge. “We men can only die; but the women!—God! I have seen one pirate crew at work, I want never to see another.”

“They may not know the peril,” said Marbury.

"Promise me, Sir Edward, that, if the worst come, you will not let my daughter fall alive into their hands."

"I promise," Parkington answered. "Neither her nor any other, so long as I can wield a dagger."

The old man nodded. "Thank you," he said. Then:—"We have an abundance of rifles and ammunition, the house cannot be set on fire, save at the doors—and they can be defended—and the roof. We should hold out until help arrives." He turned and raised his voice: "Let every man to a window, and defend it with his life. We can expect no mercy, therefore show none."

Parkington took a window on the front, Constable the one beside him, Plater and Snowden similar ones across the hall, George and the others, were at the rear. The women were gathered in the drawing-room. They were very quiet—though, occasionally, a sob, half suppressed, gave evidence of the strain. Five minutes before they had only the breakfast in mind—now, death had replaced breakfast.

Marbury stood at the open door, waiting. There was a chance, the demands would be such that he could grant. All the cash and silver, in the house, he would gladly give them, if they would take it and go.

The leaders of the pirates still held council together. They could rate the possible strength of a ship, whether it was a likely prey, and what, if any,

was its armament, and the number of its crew, but here was a new proposition: A house, with every window closed, and a man in the open doorway—a rifle in his hand.

“What do you make of it, Captain,” said his second in command, a tall, red-bearded, heavy featured man, in a red silk shirt and breeches, and tall jack-boots. He wore no head dress, other than his flaming hair. “It may be easy, and then again it may not.”

“Ah! damn! You’re a white-livered rogue!” exclaimed the one on the Captain’s left, a very stout fellow, with a patch over one eye, and a bright red scar from chin to temple. “You’re always for being careful—no wonder you’ve got the name of Coward—you——”

“Shut up!”—said the other—“We won’t quarrel before strangers, but I tell you that you’re a dirty dog, One Eye.—Put back your sword, or I’ll break every bone in your damn body!”

“Gentlemen! Gentlemen! I beg of you restrain yourselves!” said the Captain. “Remember, there is work before us. Afterward, we shall be glad to see you fight it out—though I question, not at all, that One Eye will lose as usual.”

He drew out his snuff-box and, with all the air of a Court dandy, took a pinch of its contents, dusted the traces from his shoulder, with a fine white handkerchief, and replaced the box. He was a small man, his dress was black velvet, and there

was nothing about him to distinguish him from a peaceful gentleman, save that his rapier was of somewhat unusual length, and hung a little forward, and ready to his hand.

"I am a bit perturbed, over what course to pursue," he continued. "We can board a ship, easy enough, but it is not quite the same with a house. The general aspect of the surrounding premises suggests that there is a goodly company concealed within, and, we can assume, prepared to defend to the uttermost." He paused, took a fresh pinch of snuff, the handkerchief was flourished again, and the box replaced. "I like to know something of the milk that is in the cocoanut before I crack it, but, I reckon, I shall have to take this one wholly on faith. I thought to surprise them, but that fellow on horseback upset my plans—for which he shall be turned over to your tender mercies, One Eye, if we take him alive."

"I'd sooner have my pick of the women, if there be any," was the surly answer.

"If any woman wants you, she may take you," said the Captain, gently. "Otherwise, you know the rules."

Whereat, the Coward laughed mockingly and twirled his moustache, while One Eye cursed him under his breath.

"Well, are we going to rest here all day?" he exclaimed. "If we are not to attack, let us back to the brig. We would be in nice case if some one

captured her, while we're nosing around ashore—this is a crazy expedition, anyway, so far from the ship.”

“The only thing you are fit for,” said the Captain, “is to stir up trouble. We’ve never overhauled a prize, but it ought to have had more treasure or more girls aboard. It is an awful affliction, One Eye, to have it so in the blood. But there is some truth in what you say—we are a half mile from the brig and it is dangerous. Suppose you bear our terms to the man at the door, yonder.”

“Not I, Captain! I’m ready to take my chances with the rest, but excuse me from walking up, alone, to be shot.”

The other surveyed him with an amiable smile.

“Afraid, are you——”

“No, I’m not afraid,” said One Eye, laying hand on his sword. “But I——”

“Then you will go?”

“No—I won’t go.”

“And you?” to the Coward.

“Sure, Captain, I’ll go.—What are the terms?” was the prompt response. “*I’m not afraid.*”

“Tut! tut!” said the Captain, stepping between them. “What did I tell you about squabbling. I only wanted to try the temper of you both. I will go myself. Await me here,” and he walked briskly toward the house.

Marbury saw him coming, and went down to meet him.

"Monsieur!" greeted the pirate, and bowed, his hat across his heart.

Marbury's only response was a curt inclination of the head.

"We have called, this morning, monsieur," the pirate remarked, "to collect his Majesty's taxes, if it will occasion you no particular inconvenience."

"By 'his Majesty,' I presume you mean the Devil," said Marbury.

"Precisely, monsieur. Your mind is very quick—it is a great pleasure to deal with one so exceedingly discerning."

Marbury gave a shrug of deprecation.

"What is the amount of the taxes?" he asked.

"It rests with you, monsieur—how much can you pay for his Majesty's favor?"

"How am I to know that it will buy his favor?" said Marbury.

"You will have to take my word for it, monsieur."

Marbury smiled. "The word of a pirate?"

"Is doubtful security, you mean? I grant it, monsieur, but it is the best I can give you—you may take it or not, as you see fit. However, let me point out, that, by taking it, you stand to lose certain possessions but save your lives and the house; by not taking it, you will lose your lives and property as well. *Voilà!*"

"Not exactly," said Marbury. "I may be willing to pay a reasonable amount to avoid a nasty fight, but, that is all. If we fight, we are reasonably sure of saving our lives and the cash, and of sending a goodly number of your pirate crew to hell—yourself among them."

"There may be some casualties," was the answer, "but they will not be confined to one side, monsieur."

"Possibly not, sir, but we fight under cover of the house, you in the open. You have doubtless observed that there are holes in the shutters—air holes, they are, but quite as serviceable for guns. But, what you do not know is, that behind every window, both front and rear, stands a man, with rifles and ammunition—and a slave to serve him—you can judge, better than I, what will be the result to an attacking party."

"You have a large household, monsieur!" said the Captain, laughing incredulously.

"At present, yes, to my good fortune. A party of gentlemen, engaged in hunting the fox, arrived late last evening and remained the night. With us, sir, you must know, a fox chase may last a week, the horsemen putting up wherever night overtakes them."—"That keeps the women out, thank God!" he thought.)

The Captain played with his rapier hilt, and considered. What bothered him was the celerity with which the shutters had been closed—he had seen

them swing shut almost simultaneously, as they approached. If this man spoke truthfully, then there was grave doubt of success—and, even if successful, a sorry depletion of his men, before he attained it. He had slipped into the Chesapeake to raid among the plantations close to the water, with the chance of picking up a fat merchantman or two, going to convoy off the Capes. This was the first attempt—brought about by information, from one of the men who knew something of the country, that Hedgely Hall was particularly good picking. He had not anticipated more than a momentary resistance—now, he was not so sure; it might take hours, and, in the meantime, his ship was lying in the river, with but two hands aboard. And a pirate without a ship is not long a pirate!

“Monsieur, it is this way,” said he. “I must weigh anchor and away—we have spent overlong here, as it is. I will trust you——”

Marbury bowed in affected gratitude.

“If you will trust me,” the Captain went on, and bowed back at him. “How much specie have you in the house?”

“Twelve hundred pounds,” Marbury answered promptly.

“It is not enough—I must have two thousand.”

“You ask what is physically impossible—I have no more.”

“You have your ancestral silver, and the women’s jewels.”

"The ladies are in Annapolis," said Marbury, readily, "and I possess no ancestral silver; I am a new man in Maryland. What little of my own there is shall be included."

The pirate regarded him in stern silence for a moment—then he suddenly swung forward his sword hilt.

"Will you swear, on the Cross, to the truth of what you have said?" he inquired.

"Certainly, sir, I will swear, if you wish it," said Marbury, raising his hand. "But I warn you, that the Cross is no more sacred to me than, I fancy, it is to you."

The sword sank back into its place, and the pirate chief laughed softly.

"And I would have known you lied, had you sworn," he said. "So be it. Pay over the twelve hundred pounds and the silver, and I, on my part, promise to depart straightway, and to leave you in peace, hereafter."

"You, and all your crew?" questioned Marbury.

"Oh, certainly—I and all my crew."

"But what assurance have I, that, when the money is paid over to you, you will withdraw?" said Marbury cautiously.

"My friend, as I have already said, you will have to trust my faith. If I capture the house, I should take the gold, anyway, so you lose nothing, in the end, and may gain much. Come, monsieur, to business, either of gold or blood—which shall it be?

Long-Sword makes few compacts—those compacts he keeps.”

“Long-Sword!” exclaimed Marbury, in amazement.

“The same, monsieur, perchance you have heard of me.”

“Who has not heard of you——”

“As a bloody and cruel scoundrel,” Long-Sword completed. “Such is not always true, as you now can evidence. But, we dally, monsieur—are we to have the gold or are we not?”

“Yes,” said Marbury; “I will have it brought here with the silver, at once.”

X

THE DEFEAT

WITHIN the house, while the negotiations were in progress, there had been the trembling fear of the women, and the grave concern of the men. Marbury had told no one what he proposed to do, but, as the one controlling consideration was for the women, none cared so long as they were saved.

"This pirate appears to be a well-mannered rogue," Constable remarked, peering through the hole in his shutter, "with all the airs of a gentleman, even to taking snuff in the most approved fashion. I cannot, however, say as much for his two followers—they are the scum of the docks."

"You put it mildly," said Parkington; "I should have said the scum of hell, even at long distance."

"I accept your modification, and may we never see them any closer."

"Amen, with all my heart!"

There was silence for a while, then Constable spoke again.

"They seem to be having a most amiable conversation," he observed. "Marbury will be bringing him in to breakfast, presently! . . . Look at the pirate, Parkington, he acts like a gentleman, he dresses like a gentleman, damn it! he must have been a gentleman, once!"

No answer from Sir Edward.

"Such a bowing, back and forth.—Lord! you would think they were dancing the minuet!"

No answer.

"And such a sword! It sticks out a foot farther behind his coat than is the fashion."

No answer.

"I say, Parkington, are you deaf or asleep?"

"I beg your pardon—what did you say—am I deaf or asleep? Neither, I trust."

"I have made three separate remarks to you, hence my inquiry."

"Repeat," said Parkington, over his shoulder, his eyes on the scene outside; "I am all attention."

"The last was as to the extraordinary length of the pirate's sword."

"Yes—I think this must be he," replied Parkington.

"What?" said Constable. "Must be he—what the devil do you mean?"

"I heard tales, in London, recently, of a famous buccaneer of these seas named Long-Sword," explained Parkington. "I think——"

"Great God! it is he, or I'm a sailor!" exclaimed Constable. "Do not let the women know."

Sir Edward smiled. "No! no!—As to that, however, a pirate is a pirate, the world over—there is little to choose between them."

"But Long-Sword has nothing in his favor—he is the cruelest, most rapacious pirate afloat."

"Or ashore," Parkington amended. "Ah! the council has ended—the pirate waits. Marbury has been successful."

When Marbury entered, the women crowded around him, but the men remained at their post, taking no chances.

"There will be no fight.—Silence! would you spoil everything?" he demanded. "They must not know there are women here." Instantly the glad cries were hushed. "My womenfolk are in Annapolis," he went on. "The pirate chief has consented to retire. Judith, will you gather together all our silver—not the Hedgely silver, just our own—and tie it up in a sheet, or two sheets, if necessary."

"Surely, Mr. Marbury, this is not the entire ransom?" said Mrs. Plater.

"A little matter of a few gold pieces—no, not a pistole from my guests, madame—I have the necessary cash."

"We will reimburse you——"

He shook his head.

"Why should you pay for us?" she demanded, as Marbury detached himself from the group and made for the stairs.

"Because it is my pleasure," he said, and hurried away to his room.

When he returned, with two bags in which were the twelve hundred sovereigns, the silver was in a pile on the floor of the dining-room. Platters and

candelabra, spoons and trays had been thrown into an indiscriminate heap, and bound up in a great table-cloth.

"Sam—here!" he said to a negro servant, and pointed to the silver. "Carry it behind me."

Sam's teeth were chattering, and his face took on the peculiar shade which goes with the negro's fear, but discipline prevailed, and he took up the bundle and followed his master, though quaking in every muscle.

Long-Sword was pacing slowly back and forth, his hands behind his back, his head upon his breast. As Marbury approached, he looked up and smiled pleasantly.

"It is a queer trade, monsieur, this of a pirate," he said. "Always over a volcano—never knowing peace and quiet—every man's hand against you, and yours against every man. You may not believe me, but I like it not."

"Then why do you follow it?" asked Marbury, handing over the gold, and motioning for the slave to put down the silver.

"Force of circumstances, drove me to it," counting the sovereigns.

"Which is the same thing as natural inclination," Marbury replied.

"You mean, that circumstances force one only where one wants to go?"

"Exactly!"

"And therefore that I am a pirate from choice?"



CLARENCE T. UNDERWOOD

"IT IS A QUEER TRADE, MONSIEUR, THIS OF A PIRATE," HE SAID.

"Certainly!"

"Are you paying me this gold from choice, or from force of circumstances?"

"I, most assuredly, am *not* paying from choice."

"Neither am I a pirate from choice, monsieur. But, being one, I believe in being a good one."

"Which means, that you are a particularly bad one."

Long-Sword laughed. "You have no evidence of it, monsieur. Surely, I was not rapacious in my terms to you!—There are four sovereigns too many——"

"I know," said Marbury. "I gave you all the gold I had."

The pirate gravely returned them.

"It was to be twelve hundred, no more. This is the silver?" pointing to the bundle in white. "Very good—my men shall be immediately withdrawn. Monsieur, I have the honor to salute you, and to bid you farewell," and he bared his head and bowed low.

Then he put his fingers to his lips and whistled shrilly. Instantly, those of his crew in the rear of the house, marched down and joined the main body. A motion brought his two lieutenants forward—he gave one the gold, the other the silver, and they started toward their ship. He, himself, paused a moment to pluck a rose and admire it, before fastening it in his coat; then he turned, and,

again gravely saluting Marbury, who had retired to the doorway, followed after his men.

"May the devil take you!" Marbury muttered.

"And may he take him soon!" said Constable from his window. "Shall we call off the defenders?"

"Yes—I think so; but, to make sure, I will slip down and see them sail away. Keep a sharp lookout until I return. In the meantime, let all the horses be saddled and brought around—the women can escape, then, if necessary."

"Let me go with you," said Parkington.

They had gone but a short distance, when there came, from the direction of the river, a faint yell, followed by another and another, and yet another.

"Now, what is the matter?" said Parkington pausing. "Are they coming back?"

"God knows!" exclaimed Marbury, pausing also.

"And as He will not tell," remarked Parkington, after a wait, during which no further sounds came, "we shall have to find out for ourselves."

Under cover of the trees and bushes, which lined the driveway, they gained, at length, sight of the landing. Then, the reason for the cries was evident:—the pirates had lost their ship.

It was anchored farther down stream than they had left it, and beside it lay another vessel, which Marbury recognized as one of his own ships, *The Whip*, overdue from London. Not a man was visible on either, and, except for the *Royal*

George idly flapping in the morning breeze, there appeared to be absolute quiet aboard—save only that the two rogues, who had been left in charge, were swinging by their necks from the yard-arm.

The pirates were gathered in animated discussion—their first rage had quieted into sullenness. Their four boats still lay at the landing—quite sufficient to get them back to the ship in detachments, but scarcely enough for an attacking party. Long-Sword was standing apart from the others, trying to make out what force was against them. Manifestly, if he wanted to regain his ship, the thing was to go and take it—and, at length, he gave the order to attack. How admirable his discipline, was shown by their waiting for the word.

One by one, he designated the men who should go, calling them by name, until the boats could hold no more. Then he stepped aboard the nearest, and took the tiller.

“Give way!” he ordered—“and keep well apart.”

It was the signal to the ships, also. Instantly, they came to life—and the two Long-Toms of the pirate, and the one on *The Whip*, were trained on the boats. The buccaneers set up a shout, and bent to their oars. The more uncertain the target, the more chance there was for a miss. A quarter the distance was covered . . . half the distance.

. . . .

"Please God, they do not fail!" said Marbury, breathlessly.

"Why don't they shoot!" cried Parkington.
"Why don't——"

Crash! the one Long-Tom spoke.

"Hit!" shouted Marbury. "Hit!"

Crash! went the other Long-Tom.

"Two!" cried Parkington, as the boat disappeared in a cloud of water.

Crash, went *The Whip's* gun.

"Three!" cried both together.

The river was filled with the debris—with dead and dying pirates. Of the three boat loads, not half a dozen were sufficiently uninjured to be dangerous—and they were in deep water, with all they could do to care for themselves.

One boat remained—Long-Sword's boat. The ships could not reload the guns in time to reach it—they must sink it when it swung alongside, or meet the crew as they came up the ropes.

It was close distance, now. Long-Sword, transferring the tiller to his left hand, drew his pistol and fired quickly. A sailor threw up his arms and fell. He seized a fresh pistol, from the man nearest, and fired a second time, knocking the cutlass from another's hand. Again, he cut the bulwark at another's head. Then the rail hid them. The next moment, they shot in alongside.

Before they could seize the ropes, however, a man reared himself upright, just above them,

bearing in his arms a huge water cask, and flung it down into the boat.—And the boat disappeared, as if by magic, leaving its cargo of wounded and uninjured struggling in the water.

“Bravo! Jamison! bravo!” exclaimed Marbury. “You get a quarter’s salary for that throw. Marry, how they struggle!”

“Look at Long-Sword!” said Parkington. “See, he is up the rope, hand over hand! he makes the rail! he is aboard! his rapier is out! he spits one! he spits another! My God! did you see it! struck from behind!—he is down! he is down!”

The fall of their leader ended the fight. The Coward and One-Eye had gone down with the boats—the former with his neck broken, the latter with his legs shot away. There was none to lead the few that had remained on shore, or who managed to save themselves from the river. Their one thought, now, was flight.—But where to flee!

Boom!

A ball from one of the vessels scattered the water at their very feet. They cut and ran for cover, leaving the wounded to follow, as best they might.

And Marbury and Parkington, brought to a sudden realization of their own danger, turned and made for the house, at full speed.

“Where are the women?” was Marbury’s first question, as they dashed in.

"Gone!—they are safe at Maynadier's, by this time," said Constable.

"Good!—we may have to fight for it."

"What has happened?" asked Herford.

"Enough!" answered Parkington.—"The pirate ship was captured while undefended, by one of Mr. Marbury's schooners, which had just come in. They tried to regain it—their boats were sunk—almost all on board were killed—their leader is dead or a prisoner—the rest are bound, this way, seeking to escape.—Here they come! Now for it."

The pirates were marching rapidly up the drive—about fifty of them. They seemed to have decided, already, what and how, for, at about two hundred yards, they separated into three detachments. One of these remained in front, another, of an equal number, passed around to the right, and the third, containing the remainder, made for the left of the house and the rear.

"They are going to rush us on all four sides at the same time," said Marbury. "Be ready!"

There was not long to wait. The moment the rear detachment was in place, a shrill whistle rang out, and, with an exultant yell, the pirates flung themselves forward.

They were met by a fusillade from the windows, that thinned their ranks, somewhat, but did not stop the onslaught. Before the defenders could change guns, they were close against the house, and, so, safe for the time. But it gave them no

entrance—they were practically as far from the inside as ever.

A wounded pirate, out in front, waved his hand feebly and called to his fellows for aid; another struggled to his feet, staggered a few steps and plunged down in a heap; one crawled on hands and knees to the shade of a nearby tree, propped himself against it, and there died, cursing God, man and the devil; others lay where they had fallen, their buccaneering over. The Jolly Roger would fly no more for them.

But their comrades heeded them not. They were of no value, further, could bear no part in the strife. They were as useless impedimenta as the dead, so they left them to die.

Suddenly, a chopping noise began immediately under the front of the house. Marbury listened an instant, then sprang for the stairs.

"The cellar windows!" he shouted. "A man from each room follow me."

These windows, of which there were four, two in front and two in rear, were protected by iron bars set into the stone foundation, and scarcely three inches apart. No one could squeeze through, unless two of them were ripped out. And that was what the pirates were trying to do, protected by their proximity to the house, and finding that the windows were not defended.

But the bars were staunch, and, when Marbury gained the cellar, they had not been sprung. He

threw up his pistol, and one of the assailants went down. The others instantly drew back out of sight.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Parkington; "what is the next move?"

A crash of glass answered him from the other cellar; the next moment, four pirates were in and upon them. Parkington drew his blade and took the first one, Constable the second, and Herford the third; the fourth made for Marbury, who was without his sword, and with nothing but an empty pistol to defend himself.

With a shout, the pirate leaped upon him, to be met by the empty weapon, hurled in his face with all the strength Marbury possessed. The man flung up an arm and broke the blow, somewhat, but it still struck him hard enough to cover his face with blood, and to send him staggering back against the wall. Before he had recovered, Marbury sprang across the cellar, and, seizing an axe from the corner, returned to the attack.

The pirate dashed the blood away and met him with a sweeping blow of his cutlass. Marbury caught it on the handle of the axe and turned it aside. Again the cutlass swung, and again the axe brushed it away, and again, and yet again. A fifth time, the cutlass swept around, aimed at the head, which, with an axe, is the most difficult to protect. Marbury had just time to spring back, the point ripping the stock at his neck, and cutting the buckle asunder. The next instant, ere he could

recover, Marbury whirled his weapon aloft and brought it down with all his force, shearing away the guard, which the pirate raised to meet it, like a willow wand and sinking deep into his neck. The man dropped. Marbury jerked out the axe, and turned to help the others.

He found Herford hard put to hold his own. He had been wounded slightly in the arm, and was beginning to breathe heavily. Without ado, Marbury stepped behind the pirate, and felled him with a blow on the head.

At the same time, Constable passed his sword through his antagonist, and, as the man fell, he whipped it out again, and turned to assist Parkington. But the latter raised his hand in protest.

"I will kill him in a moment," he said. "Pray, indulge me—— Ah, my friend—you do not know the double coup. . . . So, take it!" and the man died, with the sword in his throat.

"Four!" muttered Marbury.

"Five! with the man you shot," corrected Parkington.

Suddenly, there arose a great thumping at the rear, accompanied with shots and curses and imprecations. Marbury and the others sprang up the stairway, to find Snowden and the rest engaged in repelling a desperate onslaught on the rear door.

While the fight was going on in the cellar, the assailants had mustered all their strength in the rear, to make one determined effort to gain admis-

sion. Four men were sent to the wood-house for a log. They were not disturbed by the defenders, who were not wasting bullets on the departing. Another contingent followed, and were likewise undisturbed. The rest gathered close along the side of the house and waited, secure from those within. Then, of a sudden, the men emerged with the log, and hurried across the open with it. Some of them fell under the fire of the besieged, but not enough to hinder, and, before they received a second volley, they had the log safe before the house. Their first assault had been ineffectual, they were mustering, now, for a second.

To get a proper swing, it was necessary to go back a little way from the door; the moment they did so, they came into range of the rifles at the nearest windows. Four pirates went down before their fire—but the rest, with the log swung from their shoulders, dashed forward and hurled it against the door.

It split the frame and shattered it, but did not drive it from the hinges, nor loosen the lock.

"A good door!" said Parkington. "But will it stand another?"

"We shall soon see," answered Constable.

Again the pirates bore back—again, the rifles cracked and four of them went down—again, there was a crash—the splinters flew, the hinges rattled, the lock sprang inward, bent and twisted, but the door still held.

"It will not stand another," said Parkington, drawing his sword. "Be prepared."

This time, however, the assailants did not go back. They simply lifted the log and sent it against the lock. And the door yielded, though slowly and reluctantly, dragging backward on its battered hinges, so that the foremost pirates had to fling themselves forward to its aid.

Whereby, the nearest met his death, for Parkington saw, and quickly passed his sword through the man's heart, the body tumbling across the entrance. The other saved himself by a leap back—but the door was open, now.

With a rush, the pirates came—to be met by a volley of bullets that, in the mass of men, had deadly effect. They stopped—wavered—and then Parkington and Constable were at them, their rapiers flashing as they sent them home.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the former, as he spitted his man in the jugular, so that the blood jetted forth in a great stream. "I would not have missed this sport for a hundred guineas.—Ha! that is it, is it?—well, accept this in exchange, my friend. . . . What, going! and so soon! Au revoir, messieurs! my heart goes with you—au revoir. . . . Mr. Constable, my compliments on your sword-play, it was most expert. True, they were but pirates, but some of them were not to be despised." And with a formal salute, he ran his weapon back into its sheath.

The pirates were going; panic had seized them, and they were in full retreat—a dozen or so in number, caring for nothing so much as to escape. They wanted no more of the house that had been their misfortune—that had seemed so easy and, yet, in truth, was so hard. They wanted to get away—in the unreasoning fear that held them, mad flight alone spelled safety. And they went, scurrying across the lawn and through the park, as though the Devil and all his battalions were riding in their wake.

“Terror drives—all else is forgotten,” said Constable.

“We can be thankful for the terror,” observed Parkington; “it saved us, I fancy; we should not have had a chance had they been properly led.”

“We played in rare good luck,” said Snowden. “Fifty pirates! and only a flesh wound in the arm, and a shattered door to pay the bill. Oh! what luck!”

“I am the only hero among you!” laughed Herford. “How does it happen, Parkington, that you let me get away with the wound?”

“When it comes to that,” was the ready answer, “you are welcome to the honor,—if honor there be in letting a pirate stick you. I choose the whole hide rather than the hole.”

“Come, gentlemen, let us inspect the casualties,” said Marbury, and led the way out to the rear.

A dozen bodies lay on the grass and around

the doorway—they had fallen in their tracks, proof of the deadly shooting of the defenders. Marbury turned them, one by one, with his foot, to make sure that they would buccaneer no more. The last one groaned, made a faint move to arise, and, then, seeing who prodded him, drew his dagger and plunged it into his heart.

“Wise man!” said Marbury. “He saves himself a tiresome imprisonment and an awful death.”

On the other side of the house, there were both dead and wounded, the former, however, being much in the majority. Of the latter, two were maimed and helpless, and Marbury contented himself with directing the blacks to carry them into the nearest outhouse and give them drink. He would come presently, and see to their hurts. Another, blinded in both eyes by a bullet, was wandering around half crazed by the pain, and imploring some one to kill him. He had lost his dagger and was without weapon. Marbury looked at him a moment, considering—then, went to him.

“Here is what you want,” he said. “Make an end.”

The distracted wretch reached out wildly, seized the pistol, that Marbury put into his hand, and instantly sent the ball into his brain.

“Dig a trench back of the park and bury them,” Marbury directed, when they had viewed the last, and turned back to the house. And the blacks, straightway, began to do as they were commanded.

"Here endeth the reading of the lesson!" commented Parkington.

"And may the next one be forever postponed," added Plater.

"Amen!" said the rest, speaking as one man.

"It is a pity, now, the ladies were put to the bother of riding away," Parkington reflected.

The others stared at him and were silent, except Herford, who gave a little, scornful laugh.

"I think they would have enjoyed the outcome," Parkington went on; "and then, it would have given Captain Herford the opportunity to pose as a hero, *in ipso actu*."

"Captain Herford can take care of himself—" he began.

"As you have shown us, my dear Captain, as you have shown us!" said Parkington.

At which Herford scowled, then passed it by with a laugh.

They went into the house, and opened the shutters. Everything was calm and peaceful, as of yesterday. Save that the furniture was somewhat disarranged, no one would have imagined what a strenuous morning had been theirs. The table was spread for breakfast—the breakfast itself had been ready to serve. Marbury remembered that none of them had eaten, and it was now near noon. He turned to his guests.

"Gentlemen," he said, with a wave of his hand toward the ready fare, "let us fall to. Joshua,

serve the meal—but first, I think, we all need a drink.” He motioned toward the side-board, where the decanters glistened. “Help yourselves.”

Parkington filled his glass, and held it up.

“Messieurs,” he said, “it is not the time usually devoted to toasts, but, nevertheless, I give you: ‘The ladies, may they be in safety now, and soon return to us.’”

XI

THE KEY

A LITTLE later, Captain Jamison arrived to make his report, and was received with acclaims and congratulations. Whereat, the honest sailor was vastly surprised, not imagining that they were aware of what had happened on the river. He brought with him the bags of gold and the silver which, he said, he supposed was the ransom money Marbury had paid the pirates, it having been found at the landing, where they had left it in their eagerness to recover their ship.

When questioned, as to how he had got possession of the ship, he told the story:

"I sailed into the Patuxent, with a good breeze on the port quarter, and came in sight of the landing, at about six bells of the dog-watch. I noticed a brig lying close in to the dock that was strange to me, and, on coming nearer, I hove to and hailed her. She didn't answer, nor could I see any one aboard, so I hailed again—and a third time. Then a man appeared from below, and, to my fourth hail, responded something in a jargon I could not understand. I did not like the look of the ship, anyway, and this made me suspicious. I could see that she carried two Long-Toms, had a great expanse of sail, and was built to go a very fast clip. When

further hails were ignored, I ordered out a boat and proceeded to board her, with six men. How we managed it is of no moment. Suffice it to say, we got aboard with the loss of one man dead and one wounded, and found only two defenders. We strung them both up to the yard-arm, and took possession. It was a pirate, right enough. I supposed its crew were raiding the Hall, sir, and I was just preparing to go to your assistance, when I saw them returning. I, of course, did not know how far they had succeeded, and I made ready to receive them. You know with what results. It was a pretty little fight. The pirate chief—at least, I made him so—alone managed to get aboard, and had killed two of my men, when I knocked him over from behind with a belaying pin. He stepped aside, at the moment, sufficiently to save his head and catch it on the shoulder. Hence, a broken collar bone instead of a broken skull. He is not much hurt. I've locked him up in the cabin, and put a guard over him. With your permission, Mr. Marbury, I'll have him up at the end of a rope to join his comrades, as soon as I get back. A dead pirate is the only safe one."

"I think I would not be so hasty," said Marbury, with a smile. "Do you know who he is?"

"Not I, sir. A pirate's a pirate—the quicker he's dead the better for honest men."

"You forget the reward—there must be at least

five hundred pounds on his head. Long-Sword is worth his weight in gold."

"Long-Sword, did you say? Long-Sword the Corsair?"

Marbury nodded. "It is the name he gave me."

Jamison emitted a whistle of surprise.

"Well I should say he *is* a gold mine—it's a thousand guineas reward he is. I'll carry him straight to Annapolis—with your honor's permission, of course—and we shall see him doing the gallows dance according to the King's justice. Ho, ho! Ho, ho! I think I'll be quitting the sea, sir, and settling down. . . . Long-Sword! May the Lord save me! I must go and put him in double irons, at once. He may have a broken collar bone, and be locked in the cabin, but nothing but double irons will hold him safe."

"And what of the pirate ship?" asked Parkington. "If Long-Sword is a prize, it should be a veritable treasure house."

"I purposely refrained from examining her," Jamison answered. "I left that for Mr. Marbury."

"I will come down, presently," said Marbury. "Meanwhile, you may proceed with making an inventory of the booty aboard."

Jamison saluted and departed. The party finished the meal, and went out on the lawn. The dead had been taken away for burial, and the evidences of the late struggle were being removed.

"I hope the house party is not ended," said George Marbury. "The ladies can come back, and, I am sure, feel perfectly safe."

"I fancy that is for the ladies to decide," said Snowden:—"though I am quite willing for Mrs. Snowden to return. We, at least, have seen the last of the pirates, I imagine."

The other men had the same opinion, though Herford thought that he would much prefer to have killed all the pirates, and not had a bunch running loose in the vicinity.

"There is no danger to us," said Plater. "They will get out of the neighborhood about as fast as they can. They may do some marauding, on the march, but it will not be twice in the same place—and it will not be anything that will require time. They are in too great a hurry. I will wager, that they have already separated in twos and threes, to foregather at an appointed place—York or thereabouts. I too am quite willing for Mrs. Plater to return."

And so it was, that he and Snowden and Constable were designated to go to Rose Hill and bring the ladies back—it being understood that nothing be said to them of the pirates' second attack.

A little later, Marbury set out for the dock to inspect the pirate ship. As he was going down the steps, Parkington called to him, that, if he had no objection, he would be glad to accompany him.

"Come along, sir," he answered—"but I think, if the others do not mind, they would better remain to welcome the ladies, and insure that the house is here for them—there is just a chance that the pirates may return."

"Is not this attack most unusual?" Sir Edward asked, as they came in sight of the landing.

"It is more than unusual—it is extraordinary. We have not known of a pirate north of the West Indies for forty years—and, as for one venturing inside the Capes, I fancy, it is not in the memory of man. Of course, we had heard of Long-Sword, as the most notorious buccaneer on the old Spanish Main; but that is far from the Chesapeake. We never thought to see him here, sir."

"I think I should like to talk with him," said Parkington. "It will be quite an interesting experience."

Marbury laughed. "You will be all the rage in London—the man who spoke with Long-Sword—and survived!"

"I am not so sure as to London—and I care nothing for being the rage. It is the novelty of the thing that takes me."

"Well, you may quiz him to your heart's content, and I think you will find him, outwardly at least, a gentleman. He impressed me as being of superior birth—however much he may have backslid in his calling—and his manners are the equal of your own."

Jamison had seen them coming down the avenue, and had sent a boat ashore for them. He had not allowed any at the landing, he explained, lest the pirates return, and make trouble.

"Sir Edward Parkington wants to see Long-Sword," said Marbury. "Is he in the cabin, or have you had him taken below?"

"He is in the cabin, sir," Jamison answered. "I concluded to put the irons only on his legs—I think that will hold him. If you will step here, sir, I will admit you."

He unlocked the cabin door, and pushed it open, and motioned the guard away.

"Long-Sword, here is Sir Edward Parkington, who would speak with you," he said.—"You will excuse me, sir, I must join Mr. Marbury."

Parkington nodded, and stepped within. The pirate turned, slowly, on the bunk.

"You will pardon me for not rising," he said; "I am a trifle indisposed," and he indicated the irons. "How can I serve you?"

"Say rather how I can serve *you*?" Parkington replied.

Long-Sword laughed shortly. "By finishing what that merchantman bungled—make an end of me, or permit me to make an end of myself."

"You are depressed—a most unusual thing for you."

"Eh—what's that!" the other ejaculated—"a most unusual thing for me!—who are you?"

"A friend," said Sir Edward.

"I caught your name as Parkington, did I not?"

"You did."

"Then I do not even know you, sir—how can you be a friend?"

"Is foreknowledge a prerequisite to friendship?" Sir Edward asked.

"Marry, yes; and even then it is a rare article," said the pirate with a sneer. "I am a victim of that same friendship, so you will permit me to doubt."

"Yes, I know; the faithless friend and the disloyal wife. I——"

"Who are you, sir! Come out of the shadow, if you are not afraid to show yourself, I cannot hurt you, now!"

"Brandon," said Parkington, stepping into the light, "you have, I fear, reached the end of your string."

"De Lysle!" exclaimed the wounded man. "May the Devil take me! What do you here—and under a false name? Did England get too warm for you?"

Parkington nodded. "Something of the sort; so I borrowed another's—a dead man's—for the time."

Brandon laughed, grimly. "Methinks your string is little longer than my own—though I wish you success with the game you are playing, whatever it is."

Parkington took a low stool, from the corner, and sat down.

"The immediate point is to lengthen *your* string," he said.

"You will help me to escape?" the other asked.

"Yes—I have not forgot the old days, Charles."

Brandon looked at him thoughtfully.

"Why?" he asked, "what is the *quid pro quo*?"

"Nothing whatever, but past deeds. You forget the risk is mine. I put myself in your power, when I came here. A word from you, and I am undone."

"A word from the pirate, taken red-handed? Oh, no! But I will grant anything you ask, in reason and out. I may not cavil with the noose before my nose."

"Wait, then, until I ask it!" laughed Parkington. "How is your wounded shoulder?"

"It is nothing—only a broken collar-bone. I have led many a boarding party with worse. It is these damn things that weigh me down," indicating the irons.

"You could swim to shore, if they were off?" queried Parkington.

"Easily. Besides, if I fail, I win anyway."

"And the key to the irons is in Jamison's pocket! Well, it shall be my business to abstract it. And, then, having got it to you, the rest depends upon yourself—aided by my prayers."

"If it is just the same to you, I would prefer

you stopped with the key," said Brandon. "I doubt the efficacy of your prayers."

"So be it—I will leave the praying to you."

"How long am I to be kept here?" asked Brandon.

"Only a day or two, I believe. It is the purpose of Captain Jamison to carry you to Annapolis for trial."

"And, in the meantime, you will try for the key?"

"I shall try for the key before I leave the ship," said Parkington. "What troubles me, is an excuse to come back to you when I have it. . . . Brandon, how long have you been doing—this?"

"You mean, how long have I been sailing under the Jolly Roger? Four years, this spring. It was down in Havana. I fell in with a Captain Sparks. From cards to a duel was an easy transition. I killed Sparks, and, for want of something better to do, I seized his ship, put my sword through his mate—who questioned my authority—and ruled in his stead."

"And took the soubriquet of Long-Sword."

"The men gave me the name for want of a better. My rapier struck them as of unusual length."

"And of unusual strength," said Parkington, "as they, doubtless, were made to realize."

"Yes, I suppose so—they were a trifle unruly, at first, and resented discipline. They came to it,

however," and he smiled faintly. "It is a long story, De Lysle, a long story!—too long to tell at this time. I am done with the business, now. I should have quit a year ago. I had made enough, for the present, and it is poor sport, anyway—there is too much blood-letting in it. If I get out of this fix, Long-Sword vanishes forever. I will go home, and live decently. You would better follow my example, De Lysle."

"Not at present, thank you; may be, not at all."

The other looked at him and laughed.

"You are visiting at the—Hedgely Hall, are you?" he asked.

Parkington nodded.

"And there is an eligible daughter?"

Another nod.

"I think I comprehend. And you saw and recognized me, while the master of the house was arranging the terms of a ransom. By the Lord! I wonder what became of the gold?—you might take it, yourself, if it has not been picked up. It must be at the landing, somewhere."

"The ransom was found by Captain Jamison, and returned to Marbury," Parkington explained.

"Well, it is a pity. It would have come handy, I reckon. But, if you get the girl, you will get the money, too. Tell me, did you have this scheme in mind, when you left England?—No—and has your change of name anything to do with it?"

"Damn the change of name!" said Parkington.

"It complicates everything, and I do not know how to get rid of it."

"Parkington?—Parkington?—Was not he a friend of Baltimore—one of his women chasers?"

"The same;" and told him, briefly, the story of the wreck, the letters, and the substitution.

Brandon laughed. "And, now, the girl intervenes? I do not see how you can manage it and remain in the Colony. Better give her up and continue your travels.—You are not in love with her?"

"Lord! no!"

"And she?"

"Is not either."

"Then you have only your powers as lady-killer, and being an Englishman, to win out with. Man! man! you better abandon the damsel and move on. It may be pleasant sport, but it is too dangerous."

A heavy step crossed the deck and the door opened, to admit the skipper.

"Sir Edward, I am sent by Mr. Marbury to ask if you would care to look over the ship with him. There is much of interest, I can assure you—these pirates were queer gatherers. Hey, Long-Sword?"

Brandon was not inclined to answer, but Parkington gave him a quick look, and, instantly, he understood. Here was the chance to pick Jamison's pocket, and to give him the key without having

to return to the cabin. They must take the opportunity.

"Yes—that they were!" said he. "We sailed many seas and encountered many ships, and they all paid toll. I am sorry we have not aboard all that we gathered—of gold and silver, jewels and women. It is a rare life, skipper, a rare life! Sometime, the fever may catch you, and, then, hey for the Jolly Roger, and farewell to the merchantman."

"Bosh! You are talking to hear yourself talk, Long-Sword," said Jamison. "Your end is going to be enough to keep me straight, even if I want to go wrong. No Jolly Roger for mine, thank God! Sometimes, it pays almost as well to catch a pirate as to be one."

"It pays better in this case," said Brandon, laughing. "What is the reward for me?"

He saw his friend's fingers steal in to the skipper's breeches pocket—and come out empty.

"A thousand guineas!—oh, you are rated high in the profession—right at the top! I calculate, with my share of the prize money and the reward, to settle down in Annapolis, and cruise no more." (Parkington crossed the cabin, idly, to the other side, then stopped close by Jamison.) "Of course, I'll have my barge, and a couple of blacks to row it, and a small schooner to sail the Bay, just to keep my hand and voice in. Oh! it's lucky for me, that I came up the Patuxent this morning, and didn't delay along the Coast until noon!" (The

skipper was standing with his thumbs under his armpits, his chest thrown out, his head in the air—his pockets invitingly open.)

“Honesty gains its own reward,” said Parkington, slyly slipping in his hand. “Captain Jamison will be an honored citizen of Annapolis, while you, Long-Sword, will be nothing but a bloody memory.” (The hand came out, and the key was in it.) “’Tis small profit at the best this being a pirate, and cannot be for long. When the end comes, there is naught remains but to die bravely.”

Brandon heaved a sigh of resignation. “I will die game, never fear,” he said.

“Oh, it is entirely your concern, how you die!” laughed Parkington. “If you leave it to the mob, the more you cringe and pray the more they will yell.”

He took out his snuff box, and extended it to him.

“Yes, thank you!” said Brandon. “You are very kind, indeed.”

Parkington crossed to the bunk, thereby throwing himself between the skipper and the prisoner, and with his back to the former. When he stepped aside, the key was in the other’s possession.

“Thank you, monsieur, thank you, heartily,” said Brandon—“it is delicious, delicious! May I impose on you for another pinch—I lost my box during the fight?”

Parkington handed him the box, and, this time,

he was careful to stand so that the skipper could see distinctly.

"Accept it as a gift," said he. "As a slight return for an hour pleasantly spent.—Nay, I insist; I must to Mr. Marbury, so permit me to wish you, sir, a very good morning."

And with a bow and a smile, he preceded the skipper to the deck.

"Nerve, hasn't he?" said the skipper. "One would never know he has a broken collar-bone, and heavy irons on his legs."

"He will die like a gentleman."

"He confided in you, sir?" Jamison asked, eagerly.

"No—that is the last thing a gentleman would do. He was Long-Sword when taken, he will die as Long-Sword. When do you sail for Annapolis?"

"To-morrow—as soon as the inventory is completed.—She is not as rich, sir, as I anticipated, but there will be a plenty, sir, a plenty."

"Ha, Sir Edward, this is a peculiar proceeding—taking account of a pirate ship," said Marbury. "I don't know the law of such prizes, but I'll be on the safe side; no King's deputy is going to pick things over without any one to check him."

"A wise precaution, and an interesting transaction,—in fact, a wholly enjoyable occasion," Parkington answered. "Jewels, money, gay apparel,—

everything to appeal to one. You have got well into it, I see," pointing to the deck.

"We have finished it, so far as such things are concerned—that is, we have finished the collecting. They must have lately buried or spent their ill-gotten gains; this is the gatherings of only a comparatively short time, I think.

"For these things make us duly thankful!" laughed Parkington.

"Oh! I am not complaining, and neither, I fancy, is Jamison. I am satisfied—more than satisfied. Here is a diamond brooch, worth at least five hundred pistoles—and another—and another. They were in Long-Sword's cabin. And this bezelled ruby, equally as valuable; and this emerald, bigger than the others, I know not the worth of. There is much gold and silver, too, and many rings and—well, I should put it all at twenty thousand pounds, though half may be too much. Then, there is the ship itself—and Jamison and the crew have the reward to boot. Oh, he can leave the sea, and settle down, if he is so minded."

Parkington looked down at the pile of plunder at his feet. Marbury had been modest in his estimate, he knew. It may, as he said, have been the pickings of a short cruise, but it was a rich prize, then, that they had gathered. There were jewels of many kinds and many sizes, other than the few Marbury had enumerated. Dozens of pearls, and sapphires, rubies and diamonds—set in rings, and

singly—encrusted in daggers, and swords, and fans. Great heaps of stuffs: silks and laces, tapestries and damaskins.

“Mr. Marbury’s valuation is much too low,” said he, looking at Jamison.

“Do you think so, sir? Well, the bigger the value the better.” He plunged his hands into his breeches pocket and squared away. “I do not—Why, where, in hell, is the key!” he cried.

“What key!” demanded Marbury.

“The key to the irons—Long-Sword’s irons; I had it an hour ago—here, in my pocket!—I——”

“Then you, doubtless, lost it in the confusion of gathering all this plunder,” said Parkinson.

“And it is no great matter, anyway,” Marbury remarked. “You don’t intend to remove the irons, so long as Long-Sword is in your custody, do you?”

“No, most assuredly not!”

“Then the Annapolis authorities can cut them off at their leisure, if they have not a key. They are locked on now, which is the essential thing.”

“How do you suppose I lost it? I——”

“Never mind how you lost it,” said Marbury, impatiently. “You have got the man, so nothing else matters. I want to finish the inventory, and get back to the house. Sir Edward, do not let me keep you, if you wish to return.—You have had your talk with Long-Sword?”

"Yes—and you are right—he is well born, though, of course, as to that, he kept silent. He was ready enough, however, to talk over his pirate days—he recognizes the inevitable and accepts it. There will be no snivelling from him, I think."

"He may be a pirate, but to my mind, he is pretty much of a man. Jamison, let Sir Edward be put ashore."

"Well, it is up to Brandon, now," Parkington reflected as he stepped from the boat, at the landing, and turned toward the house. "And, unless I am not much mistaken, there will be a pirate chief missing, in the morning. And, pray God, he wins out! Who would have thought Sir Charles Brandon would ever have become a buccaneer? He was the gayest of us all, until, one evening, he surprised his wife in his friend's arms. He killed the friend at the next day-break, then disappeared; we never saw him more! And to think, that Long-Sword the Corsair is he! Long-Sword! they named him well—there was not a man, in all England, who could stand up before him with a hope of success. Many is the trick of fence he has taught me—and other tricks, as well. I would I could help him more—yet, I have done all I can. The couple of guineas, I concealed in the snuff-box, may be of assistance; I could manage no more. That devil of a skipper came a bit too soon." . . . He walked a little way, in silent meditation. Then shook himself,

like one throwing off a spell. "High ho! I am becoming morbid. When the devil drives, the road is apt to be a trifle rough, in spots. Brandon's fortunes are his own—I must not let them affect me. . . . To marry or not to marry?—to make the maid care for me or not?—and whether the maid can be made to care or not?—that is the question. And, more important still, shall I or shall I not doff the masquerade? Poof! I am growing childish—I cannot make up my mind. To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow! To-morrow is another day!—but, to-morrow never comes! Bah! I will decide *to-day!*"

XII

MAYNADIER'S DREAM

THE ladies came back from Rose Hill, just before supper, accompanied by Mr. Richard Maynadier and Mr. Bordley, who had stopped the night with him.

It was to the calm and peaceful Hedgely Hall of yesterday, that they returned, not the one of turmoil and stress, which they had left that morning. There were no traces of a struggle around the place; the grounds were as usual, the house as usual, the servants as usual. The only evidence that remained, were the scars on the rear door, and even those had been almost obliterated.

"It is all a fairy tale!" laughed Richard Maynadier, "this wonderful story of pirates, and ransom, and their chief being in manners a gentleman, bowing and scraping as though he were doing the minuet. I do not believe a word of it."

"No one asked you to believe it!" retorted Miss Marbury, with a toss of her head, "and, what is more, no one cares whether you do or whether you do not."

"You said that as if you meant it," said Maynadier with an amused smile, "and you said it very prettily, Judith,—but can you assume to answer for all your party?"

"You know perfectly well that 'no one' is equivalent to I," she answered, with another toss.

"Then I is equivalent to no one, and no one comprehends any one, and any one comprehends every one, and every one——"

"Dick!" she cried: "Stop it! stop it!"

"Stop what?"

"Winding yourself into a ball."

"I thought I was deducing a fact."

"Well, stop it! Besides, I do not care for the fact—and neither do I care for you, sir."

"Is *that* a fact?" he asked.

"It is," she answered. "Very much a fact."

"Are you sure—quite sure?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Because, if you are——"

"Yes?" she inflected.

"I will be obliged to——"

"You will be obliged to what?"

"To modify my opinion of——"

"Your opinion does not concern me," she said indifferently.

"So, I assumed; but, nevertheless, I modify it in regard to the pirates. I accept everything you tell, absolutely—the pirate chief and all his mannerisms, included.—Now, do you care for me?"

"You are sincere—you believe it, every word?"

"Every word," he averred.

"Well, in that event, I may care for you to-morrow."

“And to-day—this evening?”

She shook her head. “No—you must pay penalty for a little while. I am going to give this evening to Sir Edward Parkington,” she said, as he swung her out of the saddle, and added: “He, I know, cares.” Then ran hurriedly up the steps, and into the house.

Richard Maynadier hastily turned the horses over to a groom, and made to follow her, reconsidered, and went on to the library.

This was a new twist in her character, savoring more of the spoiled beauty, than of the equal-tempered Judith he had known. And he was not so sure that he did not like it. She had the beauty to justify it, the poise to make it alluring—and the wealth to make it permissible, even if she had neither of the other two.

“I might almost, if I were a younger man,” he reflected, “think she was trying to make a fool of me, or else was in love with me. But, as I can not think either, she must just be trying her hand on the old friend, who will not misunderstand. Sir Edward Parkington!—‘he, I know, cares!’ Well, my lady, do not presume with him too far. He is one, I fancy, who is apt to take whatever comes his way.”

At supper, Parkington was placed at her right and Herford on the left, and he observed that the former exerted his privilege, and monopolized the conversation. Herford, several times, tried to

break in, but was always manœuvred out of it; and, presently, with a somewhat bad grace, he gave over, and, thereafter, Parkington had it all his own way.

And Judith seemed to encourage him, at least, she did nothing to discourage; she was blindly oblivious to Herford's efforts, gave him no assistance, and welcomed Sir Edward back into the talk with almost flattering eagerness. Whereat, Maynadier was puzzled, and a trifle surprised. Here, also, was a new twist in her character.

A little later, when he was strolling alone down the avenue, he was joined by Herford, who, after a few minutes' talk, said bluntly:

"Maynadier, am I right in supposing you have no particular interest in Sir Edward Parkington?"

"What do you intend by 'particular interest'?" asked Maynadier.

"Friendship—friendship as distinguished from acquaintanceship."

"If you mean, am I an acquaintance rather than a friend of Sir Edward Parkington, I should say, yes."

"Then you have no objection, if I speak plainly?"

"None whatever," said Maynadier. "I am not his sponsor, and neither am I responsible for what you say."

Herford nodded. "Did it ever strike you that there is something queer about him?" he asked.

"No, it did not. On the contrary, I think that he is possessed of faculties far above the ordinary."

"I expressed myself poorly," said Herford. "I meant that he is not what he seems."

Maynadier was silent.

"There is something about him which raises a doubt," Herford went on.

"A doubt as to his personality, or a doubt as to his good repute?" asked Maynadier.

"As to the latter," was the sneering reply, "he is a friend of Baltimore—which is sufficient to put him under a standing suspicion. As to his personality, I do not mean that he is *not* Sir Edward Parkington—his letters were entirely regular—but that he is playing a part. He does not ring true. I cannot tell just what it is, Maynadier, but it is. How does he impress you?"

"No! no! Herford," said Maynadier. "I did not engage to swap confidences with you, concerning Sir Edward Parkington. All I said was that *you* might speak plainly concerning him, if you so wished."

"I do not ask for your confidence," said Herford. "I recognize that you are of the Council, and may know matters which are not for us——"

"The Council has no information whatever, concerning Sir Edward," Maynadier interrupted.

"Which goes to show that he is not an agent of the government."

("Which goes to show nothing of the sort," thought Maynadier.)

"And that he is here solely on his own account. As I said, I do not know what makes me suspicious, but I am. Did you notice him with Miss Marbury—ever since we came here, it has been going on—but especially to-night. He has fascinated her."

"Oh! I think not," said Maynadier. "She is the gracious hostess to her guest, who happens to be a man of prominence—nothing more. And, even if he has fascinated her, how does it concern either of us? She has a father and a brother, who are amply able to care for her. Furthermore, as to your proposition, it proves nothing, except that he is much above the average in attractiveness."

"But you could warn them."

"Warn them of what?" said Maynadier, smiling.

"Of the danger."

"The danger of what?"

"Of her showing him so much encouragement."

"And be laughed at for my pains—or shown the door."

"Your intimacy with the Marburys will permit it."

"Intimacy never warrants presumption."

"Friendship does."

"Besides I do not agree with you."

"You are blind!" declared Herford, "as blind as the Governor, himself."

"And how is his Excellency afflicted?"

"In blindness, as to his niece. The fellow is there all the time—morning, afternoon and night."

"And you would change places with him!" said Maynadier, with a laugh.

"I would," Herford answered, promptly, (and Maynadier liked him for it) "but that is not my reason. Were he one whom we knew—one of the men of Maryland—Miss Stirling might favor him, and I have no fault to find. But this is different. An Englishman, with a title, and unsavory antecedents will bear the closest watching."

"Give yourself no concern, Herford," said Maynadier. "If ever there was a girl capable of taking care of herself, and, at the same time, getting the most out of life and its opportunities, it is Miss Stirling. There is no chance of her head being turned by Sir Edward Parkington's attentions. She knows his world and his likes, and will give to his conduct the value it deserves."

"I wish I could think so," said Herford.

"Look here, Captain! I do not usually meddle in affairs which do not concern me, but your trouble is jealousy—plain jealousy. It is all you have against Sir Edward. He happens to be fascinating, and good looking, and an English Baronet—and, of course, Miss Stirling is pleased, (and so is Miss Marbury, though she is only an incident, with you) and is apt to monopolize all the attentions he will give her—as any other girl would do. He will not be here very long, and you will have

your chance after he leaves. I do not imagine, for a moment, that Miss Stirling is really interested, any more than she is interested in you, or Paca, or Constable, or a dozen others. They would all marry her, too, if they could; but they are not imagining all sorts of things about Parkington just because he has the call, for the present, with Miss Stirling. No, no! Herford; you are jealous—and there lies the whole trouble. Get rid of it, man, get rid of it!”

He raised his tones a trifle at the close.

“Get rid of what, Dick?” called Miss Marbury’s voice behind them. She was with Sir Edward Parkington, and had approached unnoticed.

“Ah! listening were you?” said Maynadier.

“Listening, indeed! You disturbed us with your noise—you fairly dinned it in our ears.”

“And just enough to make you wish for more! Oh, no, Miss Inquisitive, we will keep the secret to ourselves.”

“Then, it is a secret?”

“A great secret—oh, very great!” said Maynadier, with assumed gravity. “Herford has the doldrums.”

“And you were walking him up and down the avenue to help him get rid of them?” she mocked. “Oh, kind Mr. Maynadier! I fear, Captain Herford is weary of our hospitality.”

“Your fears are groundless, mademoiselle,” said

Herford, with a bow; "the doldrums fled at the sound of your voice."

"Then, you know how to banish them in future," she replied.

"I would not impose——"

"It is the hostess' duty to serve to her guests—and her pleasure as well, sir."

"And may I—now——" extending his arm.

"The doldrums fled at the sound of my voice, I thought you said?"

"But they may return—whereas, to effect a permanent cure, Miss Marbury, I would prescribe a walk in the moonlight.—Sir Edward will excuse you, I know."

She turned to Parkington. It was as well to leave him, now—she had done enough, for one evening.

"It shall be as mademoiselle wishes," said he.

She laid her hand on Herford's arm.

"For a little while, then, Captain Herford, you may try the cure!" she laughed, and they moved away.

"I wonder whether she was tired of me, or whether she thought you were tired of the Captain?" said Parkington.

"A little of both, doubtless!" replied Maynadier—and when Sir Edward looked at him quizzically, he added, "But it is, mainly, the butterfly, which every woman has, in some degree, in her nature."

"And a man has in a great degree. Talk about variety—we men are the bigger butterfly of the two. However, it served as a salve for my hurt feelings!"

"Were they hurt?" asked Maynadier, amused.

"What would yours be, if Captain Herford were preferred to you?" laughing.

And Maynadier joined in the laugh.

"He is a queer fellow," Parkington went on. "It is not exactly ill-nature; it is more of a disposition to quarrel with everything—of never being suited. In short, a chronic grumbler. He came out to me, the other morning, with the well developed intention of picking a quarrel—we would have been scraping rapiers, in a minute, if I had wished. Instead, I simply ignored his manner, and laughed him into a decent humor. Has he such a way with every one?"

"Yes—we understand him, and do not mind. He is a good fellow, when you get past his eccentricities."

"But one cannot be always side-stepping," said Parkington. "Some time, he will run against a man with similar tendencies—and then, there will be a little blood-letting, may be, a death."

"You see, in your case," said Maynadier, "you have touched him on the raw. Miss Stirling is a tender point with him."

Parkington smiled. "Which made me all the more careful to avoid trouble.—He is a good officer, I am told."

"A very good one—he went out with Forbes against Fort Duquesne, and made an enviable record. Now, his duties are merely nominal;—he is attached to his Excellency's staff."

Parkington nodded. "Well, I will try to keep on side-stepping. Only, what one overlooks when alone, one cannot let slip in a crowd. I am quite willing to do anything that will not compromise me."

Miss Marbury's laughter had floated to them, at intervals; now, she and Herford came slowly into view.

"Waiting?" she asked—"for what?"

"For you to change escorts," said Maynadier. "It is my turn, now."

Herford was perfectly willing to yield to Maynadier. His sole purpose had been to take Judith from the Englishman, and, that effected, he was ready to retire. He stepped back, and bowed himself away.

"You have accomplished wonders, Miss Marbury," he said. "The doldrums have completely vanished. I trust you may be as successful with Mr. Maynadier."

"Mr. Maynadier never gets the doldrums," she answered, over her shoulder. "He is far too serious minded!"

"Which might mean, that I am a bore," said Maynadier.

"Fishing, monsieur?"

"No."

"What do you call it, then?"

"What do *you* call it?" he asked.

"Now, Dick, you want me to say you are the most entertaining man in the world."

"Not unless you think so."

"You know you are conceited, dreadfully conceited."

"No one ever told me so."

"No one ever took the trouble to tell you."

"Except you."

"And that is because I like you so well."

"Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth!" he soliloquized.

"What?"

"I said, whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

"I should like to see the Lord, or any one else, chastening you!"

"My dear Judith!"

"Does that shock you?"

"A trifle. You handle the Lord rather unceremoniously."

"Not any more unceremoniously than you men do, when we women are not present."

He laughed indulgently, bending down over her.

"Do you know," said he, "that you have a peculiarly fetching way with you this evening?"

"I always have had it," she answered, with a

fling of the head, "but *you* have never noticed it."

"I have been blind," he said.

"Yes, you have been blind," she agreed, with a quick glance upward.

"Henceforth, my eyes are open."

"Such is the result of walking in the moonlight, Dick. Oh, you will improve, in time!—give the moonlight a chance."

"It requires more than the moonlight," he declared.

"Of course—a pretty girl is essential, too."

"And it requires more than a pretty girl."

"No, the moon and the girl are sufficient."

"Does not inclination play a part?"

"It is resultant of the other two."

"But in varying degrees."

"Oh, yes!" she said.—"For instance, you are more earnest to-night than you used to be—though, in truth, sir, I never before knew you to take the two necessary ingredients in one dose."

"The girl and the moonlight, you mean?"

She nodded, smiling naïvely.

"That is because they were never offered me——"

"Offered you!" she exclaimed. "Do you expect them to be *offered*?"

"Again I have expressed myself poorly!" he laughed. "What I mean is, I never had the moonlight, and the inclination, and *you* all together."

"I cannot answer for the inclination," she replied, "but as you have the moonlight and me, for the last four years, I may be pardoned if I doubt it."

"But do you doubt it?" he insisted.

"Certainly, I doubt it!—what woman would not?"

"No man would, if he could see you, now."

"Fol-de-rol!" she laughed, and snapped her fingers in his face. "Am I different from what I was last week, or last month, or last year?"

"No, you are not," said he. "I recognize it, now. Alas! that I did not recognize it sooner."

"And you expect me to believe?" she mocked—though her eyes belied her tones, had she but let him see them.

"No! all I can ask is that you be merciful."

"Do you even expect mercy?"

"After a time—when you have revenged yourself sufficiently."

"Revenged myself!" she quoted. "For what, pray?"

"For my blindness——"

She laughed, a light, alluring laugh. "Revenge is for a wrong done.—You have not wronged me. You have always been my good friend—the best friend a woman ever had."

He moved to catch her; she eluded him and sprang away, out of distance.

"Fie! Mr. Maynadier, you forget the dignity due a Governor's Councillor."

"I am apt to forget many things," said he, laughing, "with such a teasing beauty just out of reach."

"Where she will take care to hold herself until you are better mannered. What has come over you, Dick, you used to be proper enough—too proper, indeed."

"You little flirt!" he exclaimed, "what has come over *you*, you better say—where did you learn such tricks?"

"Not from you, sir."

"No, not from me—God save the mark!"

"But you seem to like them, Dick," she said.

"Don't you wish it had been you who taught me?"

"No!" he said. "No; I would rather *you* taught *me*."

"I am afraid you could never learn!" she laughed.

"Try me!" he begged. "I have unsuspected possibilities."

She looked at him with eyes half closed, a roguish, enticing look.

"And you think I could develop them?" she asked.

"I am sure you could."

"Better let Miss Stirling try—she can teach you far better than I.—Besides, I think she would welcome the opportunity."

"Miss Stirling has enough to do with the young men," he answered.

"I fancy you will find her very willing to take another."

"Where there are so many pupils, the instruction can not be thorough," he objected.

"Have you ever heard of the *favorite pupil*, sir?" she asked, with a sly smile. "Indeed, I am very much of the opinion she would even drop all the others, if you applied."

"You flatter me!" he remarked.

"Do I?" she asked, "well, I am not so sure; you see, she does not know you quite so well as some others do. And, if you are clever, she may never find you out."

"Lucky me!—You advise me, then, to take lessons from Miss Stirling?"

"Undoubtedly! You are ripe for it, and she is a rare instructor—it will be an admirable arrangement."

"And when I have learned everything that she can teach me, may I come back to you for the completion of my education?" he asked.

"May be you will not want to come back," she said.

"But, if I do," he persisted.

"And, may be, I shall have too many pupils, *then*, to bother with another."

"But, if you have not—if there is room for me?"

"I cannot answer, now. Wait until you apply,

it will depend on what you have been taught, and the extent of your proficiency? ”

He thought a moment. “ The extent of my proficiency? ” he repeated. “ Should it be much or little? ”

“ That is for you to judge, ” she answered, enigmatically—and left him.

“ That is for me to judge! ” he muttered, looking after her. “ Did she mean to warn me against learning too much from Miss Stirling? Did she mean to warn me against learning anything from her? ” He smiled:—“ Is she just a bit jealous of Miss Stirling, and has her jealousy quickened her perceptions? . . . My little Judith, have you cared for me—really, cared for me—all these years? —And have I been blind to the character of your affection, and blind to my own, as well? ”

He turned aside into the park, where the great trees were whispering, softly, to one another, and all else was still.

Yes, he loved her! Not as the old friend, who had advised, and guided, and reproved. Not as he thought the man of steady life and confirmed habits, with wealth and reputation made, would love. Still more, not in the seemly manner a Governor’s Councillor should love—but with a sudden rush of affection, that threatened to sweep away all the reserve and dignity of forty years. A love such as Paca, or Constable might have.

He steadied himself. He might love as a young man, but he must act with the judgment and discretion of his years—sedately and with good sense. He thought she loved him—thought she had shown it with all the openness she dared. But he was not sure. He might have been mistaken—he might have tinctured her words with his own hope—read in them far more than they conveyed, far more than a younger man would have dared to read. . . . Moreover, even if he had read aright, he must not permit his love to overbalance his duty. He must be the protector still; must guard her from all danger of a hasty choice, from a semblance which she mistook for the reality. Must put her happiness first, his own, only if it chimed with hers. . . . She was a dear girl—a dear girl! She would preside at Rose Hill in a manner in keeping with the mistresses who had preceded: his own sweet mother, his grandsire's stately wife. She would restore the life which had been of it, until he had become master, and let the old life die. He would go home, and prepare for her coming—prepare to live! . . .

Suddenly, he shook himself, as one awakening from a dream.

God! what if she would not come—what if she married another! . . .

XIII

THE CAMPAIGNS

THE following morning, the party had just finished breakfast, and were clustered about in front of the house, when Captain Jamison came hurriedly up the avenue.

Old Marbury, with his foot in the stirrup, had paused for a moment's conversation with Mr. Plater and Parkington, and he regarded the approaching skipper with some surprise.

"What does this mean, Jamison?" he asked, "I thought you would be well on the way to Annapolis, by this time."

"So did I, sir," was the answer. "Such were your orders—but you can't never tell what will happen. The truth is, sir, Long-Sword has escaped!"

"Escaped! How?—when?" Marbury demanded.

The skipper was plainly much embarrassed—he twirled his cap between his fingers, shuffled his feet, and his glance wandered skyward.

"I don't know, sir—it was sometime between dark and daylight. He was in the cabin, tight enough, with the irons fast on him, when night fell—he was gone, this morning."

"With the irons fast to him?"

"No, sir, with the irons off him, sir, lying on his bunk—and as securely locked as when they were on him. How did he get out of them, sir, how did he get out of them?"

Marbury shook his head. "If you cannot tell, I am sure I cannot."

"Possibly he found the key you lost," observed Parkington.

"I did not lose it in his cabin, sir," said Jamison; "it was found at the foot of the companionway. I picked it up there, myself."

Parkington nodded. It was clever of Brandon to lock the irons and leave the key where it likely would be found.

"Then he must be small-boned and small-jointed. I have heard of men who could slip the irons in that way," remarked Plater.

"I think not—they seemed to fit him very close—in fact, he complained of them pinching him."

"Like enough!" laughed Plater. "Another proof that they were loose."

"Where was the guard—asleep?" asked Marbury.

"No, not asleep—dead! dead! with his own knife buried in his breast."

"When did you discover that Long-Sword was missing?"

"A little after day-break. I sent every man ashore on the search. I did not come here, until it was proved he had escaped."

"How did he get ashore?"

"Swam for it."

"Hum! pretty fair for a broken collar-bone!"

Marbury remarked.

"He is a dangerous man, sir."

"Naturally—otherwise he would not be a pirate chief."

"He must be taken!" protested the skipper.

"We must catch him!"

"Yes—we, or some one else, must catch him—and, as he seems to have got away from the vicinity, it will probably be some one else," Parkington observed.

"So you likely will not retire on your reward, Jamison," Marbury observed; "another will get the thousand guineas. . . . Why did you not notify us, at once?"

"Because, I hoped to catch him, sir."

"And not be obliged to tell me he had escaped—I see."

"It is only human nature," said Parkington.

"Let me intercede for Jamison."

"It is not necessary; I reckon I would have done the same had our positions been reversed. Moreover, I am not much grieved over it. Long-Sword is a very decent sort of man—too decent to stretch a halter."

"You will do nothing, sir, to apprehend him?" gasped Jamison.

"Nothing!" said Marbury.

"And the seaman he killed, in cold blood?"

"Was the man married?—Yes? Then I shall give his widow a year's pay. For my part, I have had enough of pirates, and I do not propose to disturb this house party, especially the women folk, by hunting one who is trying his best to get away. You are at liberty, with your crew, to continue the search, provided it does not conflict with your orders. But Hedgely Hall is done with the buccaneering business—and, please God! it be done with her. Gentlemen, I must to the fields," and, with a curt nod, he was up in saddle and away.

"What are you going to do, Jamison?" said Parkington.

"Do, sir! what can I do? Follow down the coast, and raise the hue and cry—and, likely, find he has gone Northward! Devil's Ship! but it's a bad business."

"The pirate business is generally bad—in the end," remarked Parkington.

"If you do not catch Long-Sword, the chances are that some one else will," sympathized Plater.

"Yes, and get the reward," said Jamison—"I cannot claim the thousand guineas, unless I deliver him to the authorities."

"Then, it is the reward and not the pirate you are after?"

"It is the pirate because of the reward.—I would not turn a hand to take him, otherwise."

"Well, you better be up and doing, or you will not have any chance of taking him," said Parkington. "If I can aid you, in any way, pray, command me. I rather fancy chasing a pirate on land—it is a novel experience."

"I'm off, sir!—I'm going down the coast; may be, I can pick him up. He will likely make for one of the Virginia ports. Thank you, sir, for your offer of assistance."

"He will never take him," said Plater, looking after Jamison. "The fellow has not gone to Virginia, I will wager. He will lie very low, until his injury is healed—a stranger, with a broken collarbone, is too easily located."

Parkington nodded assent. "Marbury's course seemed to surprise Jamison," he said.

"Because Jamison was thinking only of the reward. I should have done just as Marbury did; he has the pirate ship, which, doubtless, he considers is prize enough. Jamison lost his prisoner through sheer carelessness, and Marbury does not intend to turn the plantation upside down to help retake him. Oh, the old man is usually right."

"He seems to have been, at least in getting money."

"Yes—after Carroll he is the richest man in Maryland.—You have met young Carroll."

Parkington nodded. "He seemed a particularly nice fellow."

"He is—though we scarcely know him. He has been in France since he was eight years of age, getting his education under the Jesuits, and, in London, studying law in the Temple: he returned home only last year. Having polished himself, he will now spend the rest of his life looking after his property."

"A pleasant occupation—when one has sufficient to look after."

"And at which only about half of us are even moderately successful. If I can retain my own, and my wife's, I shall be more than thankful. As for Marbury"—he ended with a gesture.

"Which means?" said Parkinson.

Plater laughed. "That is what I do not know. He has two children—you have seen them, what is your estimate?"

"I have not seen enough to form an estimate, but I should say young Mr. Marbury shows excellent promise."

"Only promise! Exactly, Sir Edward; but he should show more than promise. He is a charming young man, but can he hold together the Marbury fortune. I admit that I and all the others are undecided. As for Miss Marbury——"

"It will depend upon the man she marries," said Parkinson.

"And the fortune will be much less than George's. The bulk always goes to the heir, if he be of direct

blood, the same as in England, though there is no entail."

"Who are Miss Marbury's suitors," asked Parkington, carelessly. "No one of the men, here, seems to be, and, yet, of course, she has them in plenty."

"She *could* have them in plenty, but she will not. Every young fellow in Annapolis would have been only too happy—but, nay. They can be as friendly as they please; the instant they would be more, she is up and away."

"The right man has not come," said Parkington.

"Possibly, not!—But where can you find a better man than Paca, or Constable, or Jennings, or any one of the young bloods you meet at the Coffee-house?"

"I do not know—no one knows—possibly, even she does not know. But she will know, when the right one comes—that is, the right one for the time. He may be the wrong one in six months—more's the pity.—Yet even she cannot foresee that."

"You are a bit cynical!" laughed Plater. "May be they are the ways of England, but they are not our ways."

"Not your ways, *yet*," Parkington amended.

"And, I trust, *never* will be. When a woman chooses a husband, with us, whether for love or policy—though, thank God! there is not much of the latter—she makes the best of it. And it is

marvelous what you can do, if you settle yourself to it."

"I grant you that," said Parkington; "but the trouble with us seems to be, that, as the country grows broader in civilization, it loses in morals.—You are headed the same way; it is only a question of a little time until you are up with us."

"Do you mean it will come in my day?—that I shall see it?"

"Yes, I do—you colonists are learning fast. Witness, the Stamp Act, and so on. You are growing powerful, and with power comes laxity. But, we diverge—we were discussing our hostess; scarcely, the best-bred thing to do, but excusable under the circumstances. Has she never been in love—since she came to Annapolis, I mean?"

"I think not, said Plater; "at least, there never has been any indication of it. The one man she seems to like at all times, is Richard Maynadier—and he is almost old enough to be her father. He never has attempted to grow sentimental. He could not, if he wanted to. Maynadier and sentiment are strangers to each other."

("A word to the wise!" thought Parkington. "I must have a care, I see, for Mr. Richard Maynadier. No sentiment? Why, the man is full of it, or I observed him very poorly, last night.") What he said was: "Sometimes it is the slow hound that catches the fox, you know."

"Meaning Maynadier?" laughed Plater.

"No one else is eligible, you say."

"I did not say *he* was eligible."

"But he is the only one who is given an opportunity—consequently, he must have a chance, if he care to take it."

"Pooh! He would be sent about his business as quickly as the next one, if he got sentimental. He is the *fidus achates*—he does not want to be more."

"I see—well, it is a rare man who can be *fidus achates* to a handsome woman, without wishing to be more."

"Still the cynic?" laughed Plater.

"Very much!—it is against human nature."

A little later, Parkington chanced upon Miss Marbury near the sun-dial, in the garden.

"I hear that Long-Sword has escaped," she said, "and that father refused to permit a search for him, is it true?"

"Yes—he said he was not going to have your house-party disturbed by chasing a pirate, who was trying his best to get away—that he has had enough of pirates."

"How like father!"

"Your father is a very sensible man."

She gave him an appreciative look, which was not lost on him.

"The way to her good opinion is to praise her father," he thought, but he did no more of it, then. Instead, he changed the subject.

"You forsook me last evening," he said; "at the very first opportunity you deserted."

"To the enemy? I thought I was being very loyal—Captain Herford is in his Majesty's service, you know."

"It was not a question of his Majesty's service—every man is a king, at such times."

"Pardon! sire, pardon!" she laughed. "I did not recognize your kingship."

"That is just the reason I am complaining—you should have recognized it."

"What is the penalty for treason?" she asked.

"Do not make it too severe, sire."

"The penalty, for this sort of treason," he said,—"and I am making it very easy—is to give me as much of your society, while I am here, as I have the courage to seek."

"Have the courage to seek!" she quoted.

"That may seem modest enough, but, for my part, I am of the opinion that you are not wanting in courage—in fact——"

"Yes," he said. "In fact——?"

"In fact, you are disposed, if occasion offer, to be a trifle intrepid."

"I protest!" he exclaimed. "You have nothing to justify any such judgment."

"Nothing to justify, possibly—much to suspect."

"In what way, mademoiselle?"

"In the cast of the eye, monsieur—and the tilt of the head—and in other indefinable ways, appreciated by sight alone."

"I suppose, I should be flattered that you have observed me so closely!" he laughed. "I did not know I was so dangerous."

"I should call it fascinating," she answered.

He bent and kissed her hand, in the most courtly way.

"I would it were your lips," he said.

"Which only proves my proposition—and, possibly your own. You may be dangerous, as well as fascinating," she replied. "Perchance, here is one who can tell better than I—she knows more of the world and the ways of men. Miss Stirling, is Sir Edward dangerous as well as fascinating, or, simply, fascinating?" and, with a gay laugh, she left them.

For a moment, Miss Stirling looked after her with a puzzled air; then, she turned to Sir Edward.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"Nothing," he replied.

She smiled. "Nothing? and yet she leaves me such a question?"

"Which you can answer?" he asked.

"The answer is evident enough. Are you not ashamed, sir, to play your fine manners against the innocent?"

"By the innocent, I assume, you mean Miss Marbury?"

"Certainly."

"Then, let me answer you, that Miss Marbury is as amply able to take care of herself, as—you are," replied Parkington, with a smile.

"Which is very little," she answered; "for I admit *I* am afraid of you. You have beautiful manners, Sir Edward."

"But not to be compared to yours," he replied, bowing.

"And you say everything as though you meant it."

"Which makes for sincerity."

"But you do not mean it—or very little of it."

"Which allows you to choose what you want, and to discard the rest."

"And you dress in especially good taste," she went on.

"Which speaks well for my tailor."

"And you are, in yourself, exceedingly handsome."

"Which speaks well for God."

"Or the Devil," she amended.

"As you wish!" he said, laughingly, and kissed her hand.

"It is always, 'as you wish,' whereas, in truth, it is '*as I* wish,' when the play is done."

"The play?" he asked.

"Yes, the play—everything which makes for your pleasure or profit. And you do it so gracefully, with such a flourish of indifference, that the

other party actually thinks a favor is conferred in the granting it."

"Do you mean to imply that I have done the 'play' in Maryland?" he asked.

"Certainly!—you do 'the play' wherever you are—you could not do otherwise. It is as much a part of your nature as——" she paused for a comparison.

"As it is of yours," he ended.

"If I can do it half so well, I shall be more than pleased," she answered, promptly.

"You accept it, then?"

"My dear Sir Edward!" she laughed. "We all have something of the mountebank in our natures. He plays it best, who plays it the most, and shows it the least."

"Fine philosophy!" he commented. "Such cynicism may be permissible in a man, but it is *not*, many times *not*, in a woman."

"The men seem to like it," she answered.

He shook his head. "They like *you*—they have not seen the cynicism."

"And if they do see it?"

He raised his eye-brows, expressively. "I do not know—perhaps, and perhaps not."

"With the chances?"

"Not, decidedly not!"

"I take you for an adept," she said—"as one well qualified to advise on the subject."

"Then, abandon it—throw it overboard. A woman should be an optimist—cynicism repels."

"Yet you are a cynic."

"All men are cynical; they must be to get on with one another—and with the women."

"Another burden for us to bear!" she laughed.

"Is Miss Marbury a cynic or an optimist?"

"I should judge her to be very much the optimist."

"And hence the easier to understand, and the easier to hoodwink."

He looked at her, with a bit of a smile. "And for just that reason, less liable to be hoodwinked. Sincerity begets sincerity, if the man be really a man."

"And cynicism begets cynicism?"

He bowed. "I am speaking generally, of course."

She prodded the turf with her toe, and thought:

"I suppose you are right," she said; "you have had the experience, you ought to know. But, how many of the women you meet in London are optimists, think you?"

"Very few," he smiled.

"And why?—why?—Because you men have taught us to be cynics. You lie to us in word and deed, you deceive us, often to our shame, until we must fight back with the weapons God has given us. Even now, you are contemplating a campaign

against Miss Marbury, attracted by that very optimism which should make her an easy conquest."

He held up his hands in protestation. "My dear lady! your imagination is wonderful—you are a very child in fancy—the dark must be full of queer things to you."

She laughed, a little, tantalizing laugh, and shot him a knowing look from under her long lashes.

"We shall see," she said: "I *may* be wrong, and, if I am, you have the proving of it."

"And, meanwhile, what of *your* campaign for Mr. Richard Maynadier?" he asked.

For a moment, she did not reply, regarding him, thoughtfully, the while.

"What has Mr. Richard Maynadier to do with the proposition?" she said, coldly.

"I do not know—it is for you to answer."

"There is no answer," she replied, looking him straight in the eyes.

He bowed and kissed her hand.

"As you wish, my lady," he said, making no effort to repress his smile; "as you wish."

A little later, he sought his chamber for his walking-stick. As he came down the corridor, he bethought himself of something he wanted to tell Mr. Marbury. He went over to the door of his room and rapped—then, rapped again, more briskly. The door, which had not been latched, opened and swung slowly back. Marbury was not in, but the

bags, containing the ransom money, were standing on a table.

He stopped and, casually, glanced around; no one was about. He listened; all was quiet on the second floor. He tiptoed to the stairway and looked down; no one was visible in the hall below. He went back, and stood, uncertain, a moment. Then, he walked straight in to Marbury's room, swiftly untied the bags, took several handfuls of gold from each, retied them, went out, closed the door behind him, and descended to the party on the lawn.

Marbury would likely put the money away without inspecting it—and, if he did count it, the noble Englishman could not be suspected.

XIV

GUILTY AND NOT GUILTY

RICHARD MAYNADIER remained for two days longer at Hedgely Hall, but he never was able to get Judith alone, however much he manœuvred. After he went home, he rode over several times, unexpectedly and at unusual hours, hoping to surprise her and get his opportunity, but to no avail.

She was deliberately avoiding him, he knew, and she let him know it, in the unmistakable way of a woman. It was as though she said to him: "You want to get me off alone, Dick, but I shall not permit it."

So much he understood. But what troubled him, was whether it stopped with that, or whether there was a qualifying phrase—an "until I am ready," tacked on, and not yet disclosed.

He was not unduly sanguine, and he was properly modest, but he had thought it all over—her attitude toward him, her belief in him, her dependence upon his judgment and advice—and he considered he had reasonable ground to hope that she had come to view him in another light than as a friend. Doubtless, he had been blind not to see it before—and blind, as well, to the character of his own feelings. He simply had never thought of love. Now, he was thinking of it a very great deal.

There was something, however, which he did not exactly fancy, and that was the liking she seemed to have developed, recently, for Parkington's society—and Parkington for hers.

They were much together, would take long walks in the park and to the river, would talk for hours, while he told her stories of London and its great world. Maynadier did not know, of course, whether he ventured upon the softer side, whether he tried to strike the chord of self, in an appealing way—and Judith gave no indication. She was enjoying herself, so much was evident, and, at the same time, playing her part, admirably. Parkington was the stranger, and, since he seemed to wish to devote himself to his hostess, and his hostess was not averse, Maynadier could not find fault.

He had, indeed, ventured to throw out a cautioning word, the evening he rode home, (when, just for a moment, he was alone with her) but she had only laughed, asked him if he did not trust her, and, quickly, rejoined the company.

On the last evening of the house party, he came over to bid them farewell. Judith was going, on the morrow, with the Snowdens, to spend a week at Montpelier. Sir Edward Parkington, also, had been invited, and was to accompany them—as were Miss Stirling, Captain Herford and Mr. Constable. The rest were returning to their homes. He himself was departing for Annapolis, in the morning,

upon business of the Council, and his visit to Hedgely Hall was to be but brief.

He encountered Henry Marbury, as he came through the park, and they went, on a little way, together. When they came in sight of the house, Marbury stopped.

"Maynadier," he said, "I have something to tell you—can you give me a moment?"

"Certainly, sir;" said Maynadier, "as many moments as you wish."

Marbury considered a second, as though framing his words.

"It is this way," he said. "You have heard of the ransom money I paid the pirates. Well, it was recovered, at the landing, by Captain Jamison, and turned over to me, unopened—at least, he thought so, and my own inspection sustained him. I counted it, the other morning, and it was correct—or, I made it so. Just as I finished, I was called out, hastily, and I left the bags on the table. I forgot them, and did not return until late in the day. Then, something told me to count it again. I did—and found about a hundred guineas missing."

"Some of the servants?" said Maynadier.

"I think not—none of them would venture to enter my rooms even when the door is open, and it was closed—closed when I left it, and closed when I returned."

"Have you no means of identifying the coins?"

"None—I never make a list."

"What do you think?" asked Maynadier.

"I do not know what to think—except, that one of the guests is the pilferer."

"Pilferer?" said Maynadier. "You are putting it very mild, if the guilty one be a guest. He is a plain thief. I cannot believe it! It *must* be one of the servants."

"None but the house servants have access to the rooms, and I trust them thoroughly; besides, the thief, to adopt your name, opened my door unbidden, and that, as I said, no servant would have ventured. We are remitted to a guest, sir."

"Have you any suspicions?"

"None, thank God!"

Maynadier looked at him narrowly. "Why do you say, 'thank God!'"

"Because I do not want to suspect. I would rather lose half my fortune, than that a guest, in my house, should be suspected. If I had seen him actually take the money, I should do nothing to apprehend him—nor would I permit his apprehension."

"Why do you say 'him'—why do you think the thief is a man?" asked Maynadier.

"Because I *cannot* think it a woman. My God! Maynadier, you know these people better than I—could you think one of the women guilty?"

Maynadier shook his head. "No, I cannot; and neither can I think one of the men guilty. But,

since you will do nothing in the matter, why think about it at all? The party breaks in the morning, you will lose no more."

"It is not the loss that bothers me—it is the idea of having entertained a thief."

"Are you quite sure your first count was correct? Might not the money have been abstracted, by the pirate who carried it away? Is not that the normal explanation?"

Marbury was silent.

"Moreover, were the bags tied as you left them?"

"Precisely—at least, I saw no difference."

"And when you detected the loss from the first bag, did not you examine the tying of the other?"

"I did."

"And could you not have noted any difference—and evidence of haste?"

"There was no difference, and no evidence of haste. Everything was exactly as I left it, or it seemed to be."

"Then it lies between your own error, a guest, or a servant. With two chances to one, in favor of the guest, I should acquit the guest—and, particularly, when it marches with your own desires."

Marbury shook his head dubiously. "I do not want to suspect any one, and I will not. I would not prosecute even if I were sure of the thief; I would let him know that I knew, and do nothing more."

"In that view of it, is your course quite right to your friends—to those who are not here, as well as those who are?"

"You mean that I turn loose a thief among them?"

"I do."

"That does not bother me, Maynadier," said Marbury. "I have paid my loss, I am not lamenting. I have no friends to protect, except yourself, and you I have told."

Maynadier made no reply. He knew Marbury's way, and the uselessness of arguing the general good, and the duty one owes to society. Marbury would scorn to suspect a guest of crime, would refuse to prosecute if detected, yet he would do nothing to protect his fellow men from being victimized. It was a queer philosophy; but Marbury had been taught in a hard school, and early learned the lesson of self alone. To him, the doctrine of personal responsibility applied only to himself, his family, and his friends—further, it did not extend; and there was no obligation to society whatever. So far as he was concerned, society could look out for itself.

"I will tell you, if I observe anything," said Maynadier—"that is, if you wish it."

"Yes, please," said Marbury; "but tell no one else."

Maynadier encountered Miss Stirling in the hallway, with Herford in attendance. She met him

with a glad smile, dismissed the Captain with a wave of her hand, and attached him, instead.

And he suffered himself to be attached. If Judith would not have him, until it pleased her, he would, at least, entertain himself. He had no idea of making her jealous, but it was as well to take her advice, and let Miss Stirling give him some "instruction."

She led the way to a quiet corner of the drawing room, and, for more than an hour, he sat under fascinations such as he had never thought a woman possessed. It was the first good chance he had given her, and she utilized it to the full.

And, presently, he, too, caught a bit of the infection.

"You are outdoing yourself, this evening," he declared.

"In what way?" she asked, artlessly.

"In every way—in beauty."

"For which I am not responsible—it was given me," with demure modesty.

"In fascination," he continued.

"Which is cultivated, for what it will effect; no credit comes to me for it."

"All credit comes to you for it," he answered—"though I had rather believe it natural—it is too spontaneous to be otherwise."

"*Merci, monsieur,*" and, arising, swept him a curtsy.

"No, I mean it!" he protested.

"Is not fascination equivalent to coquetry?" she asked.

"Fascination may include coquetry, it comprehends more, much more."

"For instance?"

"Ease of bearing, under all circumstances."

"You think I have that quality."

"To perfection, mademoiselle, to perfection."

"What else?"

"Knowledge of the world, and how to use it."

"And what else?" she asked, her hand straying slowly over until it lay just short of his own.

"Knowledge of men—and their eccentricities."

"Which might mean I am a flirt," she said.

He laughed softly, "Do you want me to say you are *not* a flirt?"

"No—not exactly," joining in the laugh; "but there are different sorts of flirts, you know, monsieur."

"The expert and the inexperienced?"

"Yes—and the good and the bad, in a moral sense."

"I am endeavouring to praise you, mademoiselle," he said.

"I hope so—but," with a most enticing look, "one dare not take too much for granted."

"You could not, take *too* much," he replied, raising his hand in a gesture. When it came down it rested on hers.

She felt him start, slightly, but he let his hand

remain, and she, for her part, did not seem to notice.

It was a soft hand, and a small, with a faint perfume about it, with delicate fingers and slender wrist.—His own still lingered, hers was not withdrawn. Lightly he pressed it—no answer, save in silence. He knew now that she was drawing him on—would not rebuke him, unless he went too far. His fingers closed over hers in an unmis-takable caress. She did not reprove him; instead, she gazed across the drawing-room, a dreamy light in her eyes.

“So you are going away, to-morrow,” he said, his voice sinking lower than usual.

“Yes,” she replied, “yes, to-morrow.”

“I am sorry—very sorry—a little longer, and we might have been better friends.”

“It is not my fault, monsieur, that we are not better—friends,” she answered, her look still distant.

“Nor mine,” he said.

She turned her eyes upon his face, with calm sincerity.

“It is God’s fault, then,” she responded. “So we have none to blame. But what is to hinder your coming to the Snowdens’, there, we can begin afresh.”

“Alas! I am for Annapolis in the morning,” he said, bending down over her—“and shall be kept there for at least a week.”

"Why go?" she whispered.

"I have no alternative: the Governor's summons, I must obey."

"Always the way—duty first."

"You would not have me shirk duty?" he asked.

She saw it was a false step, and beat a quick retreat.

"You know I would not," she said. "Did you forget, I, too, come of those who serve the King."

She was very alluring, in her gown of brocaded lustring, ruby-colored, with white tobine stripes, trimmed with floss, the high-piled hair, the fair face, the dark, expressive eyes, the bowed mouth, the slender neck. And he was not dead to beauty, so near and so yielding. He loosed, suddenly, the little hand, and wound his arm about her waist.

"Oh, monsieur!" she whispered, making slightly to get free.

He held her closer. "Nay," he said. "Why do you fear me?"

She ceased to struggle. "I fear—lest we be seen."

Her yielding body, held close to his own, the perfume, the lovely face upturned, gripped his senses—for an instant, discretion fled—he bent and kissed those full red lips.

And in that instant, Judith Marbury stood in the doorway, and saw it all. The next moment, she had vanished.

But Miss Stirling was not so occupied with May-

nadier, that she had not seen—and understood. She sprang away.

“Judith Marbury!” she exclaimed.

“Where?” he demanded, freeing her, instantly.

“There—in the doorway! She saw you kiss me!”

“The devil!” he exclaimed.

“Who—Judith or I?” she asked, naïvely.

“Myself—myself! and to set you right, I acted the devil and kissed you by force.”

“That is very good of you—to take the blame upon yourself—but I am guilty, too; I let you do it.”

He shook his head—though he knew she spoke only the truth. Her readiness to share the blame, however, made it only the more obligatory for him to assume it all.

And she, knowing Maynadier better than he imagined, watched him with a sly smile, well understanding what would be his course.

“I will explain to Miss Marbury,” he said.

“And I am sure that she will never tell.”

She laughed softly. “I am sure, too—I caught Sir Edward Parkington kissing her in the park yesterday, and there is no doubt that *she* was willing, for her arms were about his neck. Furthermore, she knows that I saw her.”

Maynadier was silent. So the world turns! And Judith was willing! and Parkington was early tak-

ing the things that came his way! Vanity of vanities! He laughed, a queer, dry laugh, that had no mirth in it, no feeling.

"Which being the case, I will have another—several others!" he said—and crushed her to him.

She lay in his arms, a moment, and gave him her lips—then, she put him firmly from her, and sat up.

"You have had enough, for this time," she said, blushing.

He looked at her, flushed and eager. Her beauty and warmth had done their work.

"Just one more!" he exclaimed, and took it, mightily, as his prehistoric ancestor might have done.

She straightened her hair, and brushed away the powder he had left upon her shoulder.

"Really, Mr. Maynadier, you must not," she protested. "My gown will be in tatters with such handling. Where did you learn to kiss so—peremptorily?"

"One does it, naturally, with you—and prays for more."

"Prays!" she laughed. "A robber does not pray—he takes.—No, sir! you have had sufficient. You——"

She escaped from him, at last, and stood, rosy and panting, a little way off.

"Now, I shall *have* to go to my room—my gown and my hair are a sight—oh! you are wicked—

wicked!" she ended—and fled, leaving behind her a vision of slender ankles and silk stockings.

Maynadier looked after her with a dubious smile.

"I do not know about my being wicked," he muttered, "but I *do* know that I am a damn fool! . . . Bah! they are all alike! the most modest will frivol if she but get the man, and the place, and the inclination." . . . Presently, he laughed. "I fancy I was unexpectedly strenuous. I warrant she had not had such a kissing, in many a day."

He pushed his velvet-sheathed rapier back under his coat-skirt and brought the handle forward, brushed the powder from his shoulders, straightened his cravat, and, taking out his gold snuff-box, flourished a pinch to his nostrils. He would wait until she came down.

Presently she came, descending slowly, her dress held with both hands. Her hair had been put to rights, her gown smoothed out.

Maynadier stepped forward, and met her at the foot of the stairs. She paused, just out of reach.

"Will you promise to be well-behaved?" she asked, tantalizingly.

"If you will promise not to tempt too far," he replied.

"Tempt!" she inflected. "I am no temptress, Mr. Maynadier."

Gravely, he took her hand, and led her before the mirror, in the drawing room.

"No temptress, think you?" he inquired. "No temptress!"

"I cannot help what God has done," she said, and smiled in the glass, alluringly.

"Careful!—careful!" he admonished—"or I have visions of another tousled head-dress."

"Very pretty—very pretty, indeed!" said Herford's voice behind them. "May I come into the picture?"

Instantly, Maynadier dropped her hand and stepped back; but she, womanlike, was the nimbler witted.

"You may have a portrait of yourself, *alone*," she answered; "this one is finished."

He laughed superciliously. "I hope so," he said; "finished for all time."

"Why, finished for all time, Captain Herford?" she inquired, a chilly note in her tone. "If Mr. Maynadier is good enough to show me, before the glass, how becomingly I am gowned, what affair is it of yours, or of any one?"

"I should never have guessed it!" he returned, with affected contrition.

"Possibly not, you are very slow at times."

"Because," he went on, "Mr. Maynadier's attention seemed to be directed entirely to your lips."

"What do you mean, sir?" Maynadier demanded.

She put her hand, restrainingly, on his arm.

"You must not quarrel with him," she said. Then to Herford. "And if it were, sir, do my lips not justify it?"

"Marry, yes!" he answered curtly, "and your eyes, and your hair, and everything about you."

"Just what Mr. Maynadier was engaged in telling me, when you broke in. You have told me the same, a score of times; surely, Mr. Maynadier may tell me, *once*."

She was trying to find out just how much Herford had witnessed. There was no occasion for Maynadier taking up the quarrel—if he had seen only what had happened since she came down from her room. Indeed, she was not particularly averse, if he had seen it all. Herford would hold his tongue, and, with a man of Maynadier's notions, it would be in her favor, likely—he would think he had done her a wrong—had put her in a false position—he would try to right it. And, if she could effect it, he would be caught. She wanted to bring him to a proposal—then, she could decide whether to return to England or to stay. If she were to stay, she knew that Maynadier was the only man who could persuade her—and, at the pinch, even his attractions might fail.

Maynadier, for his part, having made a "fool" of himself, was prepared to accept its responsibilities, even to fighting a duel with Herford, if necessary to save Miss Stirling's good name.

For him, the catastrophe had been, when Judith Marbury saw—and was seen. He did not think she really cared for Parkington—the flattery of being noticed, with his air of distinction and position, had doubtless turned her head. It would be all over with, in a month or two, when he departed, and, may be, the flirtation would not last even so long.—Afterwards——? He did not know. She had something to explain, as well as he! Possibly, it would be wiser for him not to explain—to act as if none were required. A man is different from a woman: he may take what comes, if he take it skilfully; but, a woman may not take—and be caught. That was Judith's misfortune—she might have been kissed by Parkington, and a dozen others, and no one would have been the wiser. But she had been seen; and, henceforth, she was under the suspicion of every one who knew it.

“Is it going to stop with the ‘once’?” Herford demanded.

“You will have to ask Mr. Maynadier,” she replied, laughing.

“And he declines to express himself,” said Maynadier, instantly. He offered his arm to her and bowed. “Shall we resume the mirror, or shall we go outside?”

“Outside,” she answered, pressing his arm. “Will Captain Herford go with us?” holding out her hand and giving him a dazzling smile. (She

must take him along and be nice to him, she thought.) And she conquered, as she knew she could with him.

"You do not deserve it," she whispered, as she slipped her arm through his, "but, then, you can be very nice, at times."

He smiled, much as a child might have done, and, in an instant, his good nature returned.

"I am sorry, Maynadier," he said. "I apologize to Miss Stirling and to you. I acted like a spoiled boy."

"If Miss Stirling pardons you, mine goes with it," Maynadier replied. "You are a trifle impulsive in your judgment—sometime, it will lead you into trouble."

"It is the sort of impulsiveness a woman can forgive," Miss Stirling said, and leaning for a moment on his arm.

Which completely captured Herford—as she intended it should do—and made it a matter of indifference how much he saw. And Maynadier smiled in understanding, perceiving the play and its motive,—and, leaving them together, he went in search of Miss Marbury.

He found her, somewhat later, coming from the park with Mrs. Plater, Miss Tyler, Constable and Paca. To his surprise, she greeted him with the old smile, and motioned him beside her.

"She knows she is guilty, also," he thought, "and suspects that Miss Stirling has told me."

"Well, I see, sir," she said, as they dropped behind the others, "that you have lost no time in securing instruction—and have made rare progress. I foretold that you would be the favorite pupil."

He made no attempt at not comprehending—she had seen him, so, why dissemble?

"There are other favorite pupils, also, it would seem," he remarked, significantly.

"Sir Edward Parkington?" she laughed.

He was not prepared for such candor; he was astonished, and his expression showed it.

"I see you understand," he said.

"Why should you be surprised?" she asked—"for you were surprised, Dick, or else I cannot read your face."

"I *was* surprised—that you should admit it."

She looked at him, puzzled. "I am afraid I do *not* understand," she said. "Admit it! Admit what?"

"Sir Edward Parkington."

Her frown deepened. "Have you been mixing the brandy and the wine?"

He laughed, a bit scornfully.

"Why admit, and then deny?" he asked.

"Really, Dick, either I am woefully stupid, or else you speak in riddles."

"You are not stupid, and neither do I speak in riddles," he said. "You admitted the Parkington matter, just as I admitted the Miss Stirling matter; because it is useless to deny it."

"I admitted the Parkington matter?" she marvelled. "I was not aware I admitted anything. You said there were other favorite pupils, and I asked you—but without expecting an answer—if it were Parkington."

He shook his head. "It will not do, Judith—the explanation is an afterthought."

"Dick," she said, "I lose patience with you, sometimes—just what do you mean?"

"I mean this: You saw me kiss Miss Stirling, did you not?"

She nodded—but her eyes were straight ahead.

"Well, Sir Edward Parkington kissed *you*, in the park—so, there is not much to choose between us."

For a little while, she made no answer—then, she laughed, softly and musically.

"Dick!" she said—"Dick! do you believe it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Answer me—do you believe it?"

He looked at her—eyes half closed, in contemplation—and made no reply.

"Richard Maynadier, I want to know, whether you believe that tale, or whether you do not."

"I do not *want* to believe it," he said, after a pause.

"Thank you! but that is not enough; any friend would naturally not *want* to believe. It is not what you want, but what you do believe."

"Will you tell me it is not true?" he asked.

"I will tell you nothing," she returned, "until you answer my question."

"I will believe whatever you say."

"Then, you will be without belief on this question."

He hesitated a bit longer. Between Miss Stirling's assertion and Judith Marbury's method of denial—for denial, he assumed it to be—it was difficult to choose. But, in his heart, he was doubting the former—her eyesight was at fault—something was at fault. It could not have been Judith—some one else, who resembled her in the moonlight. He cared, not at all, who, so long as it was not she. That Miss Stirling had deliberately lied, did not occur to him. He held woman on too high a plane—besides, the Maryland women (whom he knew) did not lie.

"For the last time, Dick," she said, the faintest touch of chilliness in her tones, "do you believe that I ever kissed Sir Edward Parkington, in the park or elsewhere?"

And, now, Maynadier's answer was ready and instant.

"I do not," he said; "I think I never did."

"You great stupid," she laughed. "Of course you never did. But why was it so hard for you to say it?"

"I do not know," he confessed.

"Oh, yes, I think you do," she answered. "It was because *I* had caught *you*—for you, sir, there can be no denial. And your forgiveness will have to bide a bit, *Mr. Maynadier*."

And before he could reply, she had left him; nor did he see her, again, before he departed from Hedgely Hall.

XV

LONG-SWORD AGAIN

FOR more than six weeks, taken up entirely by his duties as one of the Council, Richard Maynadier remained in Annapolis or at country houses in the immediate vicinity;—Whitehall, the Governor's summer place, ten miles distant; at Belvoir, the Ross place on Wyatt's Ridge, up the Severn, overlooking the waters of Round Bay; at Tulip Hall, the Galloway place on West River; and at Montpelier, the Ridgely place, on the Savage.

Governor Sharpe was having his troubles with the Lower House of the General Assembly over the Supply Bill, which he regarded as necessary in one form, and the law makers in another. The executive and the legislative minds would not meet, as to what was best for the well-being of the Colony, and, as a result, they were kept in session through the summer, and not suffered to adjourn. The Governor refused to prorogue them until they passed a Bill acceptable to him; they refused to pass such a Bill. A deadlock was the natural result—during which much unkind language was used, by the Representatives toward the Governor.

He, however, having sent them a message making evident his desires in this particular, was dignifiedly reserved. They knew what he wanted—when

he got it, or something near it, they could go home. If they went home, without being prorogued, those, who were in accord with him, would pass his Bill. He had the whiphand—he could afford to maintain a dignified reserve. Moreover, it was his nature.

Meanwhile, Sir Edward Parkington had spent one week with the Snowdens, and then, on their urging, had consented to remain three more. After which, he went to Sotterly, for a short visit, and then to Rousby Hall. In the first part of August, he was due at Whitehall, for an indefinite stay.

He had settled down, to a skilful courtship of Judith Marbury, the day they arrived at the Snowdens', and had continued, persistently, during the two weeks to which her visit had been prolonged. He had had—to him—several very satisfactory talks with old Marbury, just before he left Hedgely Hall, and he thought that all effect of the overflow of confidence, on the part of the latter, had been forgotten, and that he would welcome Sir Edward Parkington as a son-in-law. In fact, if he could have been assured of the daughter, he would have been entirely satisfied.

She was exasperatingly perplexing. She had been most responsive up to a certain point, but he could never get beyond. He had not tried to make love to her, deliberately and with evident purpose, but he stopped just short of it. And she, for her part, appeared to be flattered by the attentions of the cultured Englishman, and to receive them with

something more than a passing pleasure. Yet, behind it, there was a reserve—a something—which all his efforts had failed to penetrate.

At times, he thought she was deliberately trying to draw him on; then, again, that she was trying to stay him. It was very fascinating, very pretty, and very alluring, but it was certainly not satisfactory to him. She must love him, before he could confess the changed identity, and hope to hold her; for he had arrived at the conclusion, that Judith Marbury would marry only where she loved.

The nearest he came to love-making—and an incident worth narrating, because it touched him rather closely—occurred at the Snowdens'.

One day, the talk had turned on the general subject of those who had left the old country and settled in the new, under assumed names—the old ones being a trifle unhandy, either on account of the law, or for some other reasons. Parkington had had nothing to do with suggesting the topic—in fact, he joined them when it was well underway.

"For my part," said Herford, "I want nothing to do with the man who takes a false name. He is a rogue—you can gamble on it."

"You are a trifle too general," objected Constable. "You forget the object he may have in changing his name. Is it honest, or is it not?"

"Honest!" retorted the Captain. "Does not the very fact answer for itself. A false name! much honesty there is in that."

"As much as can be said," returned Constable, "is that it puts him under suspicion, *if known*. But, if it be not known, and if the man conduct himself properly, under his new name, I, for one, would not care."

"Would not care because you would not know!" laughed Herford. "It would be otherwise, if you knew."

"If I knew he was a criminal, yes—if I knew he had changed his name for some other reason, it would not. In this new country, we have to take men for what they are worth, as men—we cannot look too closely into motives, so long as they do not hide a crime."

"Do either of you know a case in point?" asked Snowden.

"No!" said Herford.

"Nor I," said Constable; "however, I am very ready to believe there are instances right around us."

"Among our friends?"

"Hardly!" laughed Constable. "I do not mean among those we know, but among those we do not know. Though, for the matter of that, if we go back a generation or two, it might apply to us, also. How do you know, Herford, that your outcoming ancestor did not change his name?"

"Do you mean to imply——"

"Now, do not get excited—we are arguing an abstract question——"

"Which you have turned into a personal question."

"Then I will change it. How do I know, that the original Constable, in America, did not go under some other name in England.—I don't—you don't—no one knows. We take each other on faith, the only difference with us is, that the faith extends back over a generation or two." He glanced around him. Miss Marbury was not in hearing. "There is old Marbury, for instance. He is new. How do we know his name is Marbury? He says it is—so far as we are informed, he has always said it is, but we do not *know*. We take him on faith. We take almost every one on faith. Is it not so, Parkington?"

"Undoubtedly," was the answer. "The only advantage we, of England, have is a few more generations."

"A few more generations!" exclaimed Herford. "You, who have them can afford to be indifferent. It is we, who have only one, or two, or, at the most, three who have to be careful."

"I do not quite grasp your point," said Parkington.

"It is plain as I can make it," was the retort.

"That may be true," returned Parkington, with an amused smile, "but, nevertheless, I fail to comprehend."

"Take your time to it, then," Herford answered, with a shrug, "it will come to you, presently,"

and he sauntered away to join Miss Stirling, whose laugh was heard toward the house.

"Parkington," said Constable, "you are very considerate.—We know Herford and his way, and do not take offense, but you have no reason for holding off."

Parkington smiled. "Herford simply amuses me," he said. "I always want to laugh, when he grows sarcastic. He hits my funny-bone instead of my temper. I suppose, for my own reputation, I should call him out, but, to my mind, a spanking would be more appropriate."

"Exactly our judgment," remarked Snowden. "And, yet, he is an excellent officer, with a first-class record in active service."

"So Maynadier tells me," said Parkington.

"Just now, he is infatuated with the Governor's niece, and has a quarrel with every one who looks at her," observed Constable. "And, on that score," (smiling) "he has fair ground for being a trifle touchy with you."

Parkington laughed, and accepted the charge. It was just as well, if he could direct attention to Miss Stirling, while he was making his way with Judith.

A little later, Miss Marbury chanced upon him, seemingly by accident—in fact, by intention—as he was passing to the card-room on the lower floor, and, presently, they were strolling back and forth in the rose-walk.

"Sir Edward, I want to ask you something—and I want you to give me a true answer," she said.

"I always strive to make true answer to you," he replied.

"Do you? Well, I am not so sure. However, be truthful now, and I forgive the past." She turned and faced him. "What were Mr. Constable and Captain Herford and you discussing a little while ago?"

"Many things," he answered—"sort of a desultory gossip without point."

"And among the 'things' were the Marburys. Mr. Constable was talking. He said: 'Old Marbury, for instance. He is new. How do we know his name is Marbury? He says it is, but we do not know.' I did not hear more—I could not help that I heard so much. I was passing behind the hedge, and his words came to me, before I could realize they were not for my ears."

"My dear Miss Marbury, he was only citing an instance to prove a general proposition!" Parkington exclaimed. "We were not discussing any one. Had you heard the last of his remarks, you would have understood. They were, 'we take almost every one on faith.' I am sure——"

"I am not sensitive," she interrupted. "I know we are new people—that my father is the founder of his family—that we have to stand, George and I, on our own merits, and father's money. I have great faith in the latter, Sir Edward!" she laughed.

"It will get me a husband from among the aristocrats of the Province, if I wish it."

"It will do more—it and your sweetness will get you a husband from the gentlemen of England," he said, with a meaning look and a low bow.

"If I went to London, and hawked myself around for sale, maybe," she answered, deliberately misunderstanding him.

"Why go so far, my lady?" he asked.

This time, there was no misunderstanding possible, but she still continued to treat it as impersonal.

"No," she said, with a shake of her head, "that would be unnecessarily difficult for the man—he would have to prove too much; and the further removed the proofs are from America, the more they are required."

"But if the man thought nothing of the difficulty?" he asked.

"I should be severe!" she laughed. "I should want to be assured, first, of his good faith."

He bowed.

"And of his family's willingness, if I were to go to England."

"Suppose you did not have to go to England—suppose that he remained here?"

"It is not supposable," she answered.

"But if it were?" he insisted.

"Then, it would be eliminated."

"And what else would he have to prove?"

"He would have to prove," she answered, slowly, "that he has a right to the name he bears."

Though she was watching him closely, he gave not the slightest indication of surprise.

"Would that not be most unusual," he said—"to require a man to prove that he is *not* an impostor? Is not the presumption with him instead of against him—unless, of course, something has aroused your suspicions?"

"Yes!" was the vague reply, that told him nothing, and let him think anything. "And, then, after he had done all these things, Sir Edward, he would have to make me love him."

"My dear Miss Marbury," said Parkington, with an amused smile, "when you admit the love element all else departs."

"I should not love him *until* he had complied with the conditions."

"You would coerce love?" he asked.

"I should try," she answered, after a little pause.

His hand found hers, as though by accident, and she let it linger for an instant, before she took her own away. Then, she said:

"Sometimes, Sir Edward, I fancy you are inclined to play at making love to me just to keep your hand in!" and, with a merry laugh, fled.

In the first week of August, Sir Edward Parkington came to Annapolis to stay with Governor

Sharpe, preparatory to going with him to White-hall.

He promptly returned the two hundred pounds, his Excellency had lent him earlier in the season; the card tables had yielded very good pickings from his fellow guests, and no need for any exercise of his particular skill, either, his natural ability, and Dame Fortune, having been ample for success.

The Governor and the Lower House had reached an agreement as to the Supply Bill, at last, and the Assembly was scheduled to be prorogued on the morrow. The town was filled with those who usually attend the last hours of any legislative body:—the officers of the Provincial Government, the Councillors, the Representatives, the hangers on, the spoilsmen and the riff-raff. Otherwise, Annapolis was deserted.

The heated spell was at its height, and the gentility had, long since, sought the cool and quiet of their country estates, along the Eastern and Western Shores. The Governor's house was open, with its usual retinue of servants, but it was alone in its grandeur. The rest showed only a single light at night, and a solitary servant, left to care for the man of the family who was in presence. They, too, would vanish on the morrow, and Annapolis would, so far as the sacred precincts of the quality were concerned, become a dead city, until Autumn touched it again to life.

It was something after ten o'clock, when Sir

Edward Parkington, being bored with himself, left the Governor's mansion, and sauntered through the deserted precincts of the town to the Coffee-house, on Church Street.

He could count on finding some of the young bloods there, and some of the old bloods, as well—the legislature could not hold every one, on such a night. Before he came to State House Hill, he saw that the Assembly had risen, and, when he reached the Coffee-house, the noise, from within, told him that he should find plenty of companionship.

In the larger room, were gathered a coterie of the younger men, who greeted him with a shout of welcome.

"Come in, Parkington! come in, and join us!" shouted Mr. Cole. He thundered on the table. "Here, Sparrow, a glas'h for Sir Edward. We are drinking confush'on to those who think differently from us."

"I can drink that toast, and think as I please!" laughed Parkington.

"'Zactly! 'Zactly! that's just it—you have the idea—shink as you please—the point isn't to shink, it's to take a drink.—Sir Edward, your good health!"

Parkington drank, then put aside his glass, and sat down. Mr. Jennings, who was reading the Gazette, looked up.

"Here is a fellow who must have been as mellow as our friend Cole," he said. "Listen:

“A hat was taken off a gentleman’s head in the street before the Subscriber’s House in Upper Marlborough, on Friday night, the 7th ultimo. Whoever will stop the said hat, if offered for sale, and discover the thief, so that he may be brought to justice, shall have a reward of two pistoles paid by B. Brookes.”

“Go ’long, Jennings!” said Dr. Upton Scott, (who having been the surgeon on Wolfe’s staff, at the battle of Quebec, had come to Annapolis, married a daughter of John Ross, the Proprietor’s Deputy, and built one of the most attractive houses in town—on the banks of the Spa, adjoining the residences of Carroll and Tasker). “You are trading on our credulity.”

“I swear it is here—just as I read it.”

“Well, even Cole has a long way to go, before he gets as drunk as Brookes’ friend. But, cheer up, old man, you are getting there!” said the Doctor, clapping Cole on the shoulder, and spilling a pint of Madeira out of his hands.

“I’m getting there!” Cole agreed, looking up with a silly smile, “but I’ll get there fas’her if you spilled les’h, Scott.

“I’m a s’h’ailor bold, a s’h’ailor bold,
Ho! Ho! Ho!
I’m a s’h’ailor bold, a s’h’ailor bold,
Ho! Ho! Ho!”

“Stop your infernal din!” said Lloyd Dulany, “or we will take you up stairs, and put you to bed.”

Cole struggled to his feet, and stood swaying, uncertainly, for a moment.

"I'm ins'h'ulted!" he said, "ins'h'ulted!"

Jennings pushed him back in a chair.

"You're drunk, again, Cole," he said. "Just go to sleep and forget it."

"Is'h that advi'sh of a frien'?"

"Yes—very much a friend."

"That s'h'ettles it—a frien' always safe," and he sat down heavily, and almost, instantly, was asleep.

"Cole's only occupation in life seems to be to sober up so as to be able to get drunk again," said Jennings to Parkington; "and that is why we tolerate him."

"Every one of us has some fault," said Parkington. "I am——"

His voice trailed off and stopped. He was facing the doorway, and, in it, a man was standing.

He was a slender man, of medium height, with a wonderfully clean-cut face, and dark, expressive eyes. His coat and breeches were of dark-blue broad-cloth, his waistcoat of white linen, his stockings of black silk, and he carried a walking-stick. A second, he ran his eyes over the group; then, for the first time, he seemed to see Parkington. A look of incredulous amazement broke over his face.

"Parkington! by my soul, this is a surprise!" he exclaimed, coming forward with extended hand.

"I thought you were rustling it with the smarts at White's."

"Brandon!" cried Sir Edward. "As I live, Brandon! Gentlemen, let me present you to Sir Charles Brandon, my very good friend and intimate."

Brandon acknowledged the introduction with sweeping grace.

"I am, indeed, fortunate to find Sir Edward Parkington, here," he said. "I had thought to meet only strangers; instead, I am already in the house of my friends. There is nothing like a familiar face to make one feel at home."

Parkington clapped him affectionately on the shoulder.

"You do not know Annapolis, Brandon!" he exclaimed. "They made me one of them from the first. I have been here two months, and I ought to be moving on, but, bless me! I have not thought of going."

"And we have not thought of letting you go," said Jennings. "We are going to keep you all summer, and all winter, too, if you will remain—and your friend, also," with a bow to Brandon.

"You see how it is, Brandon," said Parkington. "Stay a week, and you will stay the summer. Better depart before the allurements get too strong. I warn you; I lingered overlong."

"You make it very tempting," returned Bran-

don. "Almost thou persuadest me to try the hazard—and to lose."

An hour later, the party broke up and separated. Parkington and Brandon bade the rest farewell, and went slowly up Church Street to the Reynolds Tavern, where Brandon lodged.

"Now," said Parkington, "may be you will tell me what scheme of folly brings you here? Have you not run dangers enough?"

"I am surveying the province with the idea of settling down," was the mocking reply.

The other laughed, shortly. "I think you may be gratified—via the gallows. Why, man alive, suppose you run upon Jamison or Marbury, and they recognize you?"

"Pooh! Sir Charles Brandon, the friend of Sir Edward Parkington recognized as Long-Sword the Pirate? Impossible, monsieur! impossible!"

Parkington shrugged his shoulders. "Well, your head must bear the penalty of error, if you are detected—but it is foolishness to chance it."

"I have taken shorter chances and always won."

"I was never so amazed, in my life, as when you walked into the Coffee-house," said Parkington.

"My face must have shown it."

"It did," laughed Brandon. "For a moment, I thought you were going to sing out, 'Long-Sword! Long-Sword!'"

"And I, 'what if he calls me De Lysle?'"

"Then I rendered you a most important service—one that should settle all doubt on the subject of your indenture—if it arise. Not a man, around that table, will ever believe you anything else than Parkington. Your surprise, at seeing me, was too genuine to be assumed; and my addressing you as Parkington, too spontaneous to have been prearranged." He laughed softly. "We together will make a fine pair of knaves, De Lysle."

"We do—we can vouch for each other—and you, being the real Sir Charles Brandon, can vouch for me, even though I am denounced by one who knew the real Parkington.—But I do not exactly see how it is to help me if I want to change back to my own name. In fact, it looks to me, Brandon, as if it has complicated matters. However, another time for that. Tell me how you happen to be daring fate here, in Annapolis, instead of on the ocean, faring safely back to England?"

"There is not much to tell," Brandon answered. "I opened the irons, and got away, shortly after the ship was quiet—about four bells, I think. The guard outside saw me, just as I was within reach. I was forced to put his own knife in him, to keep him from yelling and disturbing the slumbers of the crew, and, incidentally my own escape. I had locked the irons, after they were off, and thrown the key down the companion way; it would look, to Jamison, as if he had lost it. After that, it was easy to drop overboard, and swim ashore.

"Once there, I made my way straight back into the country, and was twenty miles inland, when day broke. A stranger, with a broken collar-bone, is fairly well marked, so I avoided habitations and mankind. For three days, I lay concealed in the forest, subsisting on berries and wild fruits; then, I ventured on—and chanced upon a hut, deserted of man, but with a litter of wild pigs as tenants. I remained there for four weeks, living on the pigs, while my shoulder knit. When it was healed, sufficiently not to betray me, I proceeded northward, eventually reaching Frederick. There, I put up at Charlton's tavern and refitted—having abundant money, thanks to you, and the fact that they had not deprived me of my own when captured. That accomplished, I rode here, with my servant, whom I hired in Frederick, to take ship to England. I arrived late this afternoon, to find no ship sailing for ten days."

"Why did you come here, rather than go to Alexandria, or York?" said Parkington. "Was it not a useless risk?"

"My friend," said Brandon, "I have found, in some years of adventuring, that one experiences the least danger where one has reason to anticipate the most. Neither Marbury nor Jamison, I think, is in Annapolis—but, if they were, and ventured to denounce me as Long-Sword, what evidence have they to substantiate their claim? Their word, only.

Against it, is *your* knowledge that I am Sir Charles Brandon, and my papers, which are regular."

"But if I had not been here?"

"I had but to demand that I be brought before you—I knew you were somewhere within distance. Oh, it was decidedly safest for me, here. Besides, I wanted to see Annapolis.—De Lysle, why not come back with me? The Marbury girl is not for you——"

"She is not?"

"No—and you are not for her. The son of the Earl of Doncaster does not mate with a Colonist. It may seem pleasant enough, now, in the warm weather, with the country life we all love then. But wait till London and its charms begin to call."

"You do not know all," was the answer. "I am a fugitive from justice—two felonies were overlooked; the third was the breaking straw, and the Earl disowned me," and he told the story.

"Bosh!" said Brandon, at the end. "You were angry—the Earl was angry, (and, properly, so) and the ship sailed before he cooled, or you had time to show repentance. Come home with me. It is the easiest way, all around. Stay here, and, sooner or later, the real Parkington will arise from his grave to plague you. You cannot explain—no explanation, with a dead man and a grave in it, will be accepted. The story will not down—and even though you do marry Miss Marbury, and she knows the truth, she will always doubt you. For

my part, I fail to see how you are to shift names, and hope to stay in Maryland. To my mind, you must masquerade always, or move on. So, why not move on—to England? Your sire's anger will have had time to cool. You throw yourself on his mercy—promise to sin no more. And, behold! the returned prodigal and the fatted calf!”

“You paint a pretty picture!” was the laughing answer; “but you do not know the Earl of Doncaster. There is about as much chance for my forgiveness, as there is for you to become King.”

“A trifle overstated,” returned Brandon; “there is no chance, whatever, of Parliament altering the succession in my favor.”

“And no chance, whatever, of the Earl altering the judgment he has passed.”

“You are hard to convince,” said Brandon. “Yet why not make the effort? The family may be done with you, as he said, but, unless you offend again, the prosecution is not likely. Moreover, you must not overlook the fact, that there are only two lives between you and the title.”

“Two lives, when I left England—with another coming, and a sister-in-law who promises to be as prolific as a rabbit. Oh, no! I have no chance for the title—my brother and his wife will take good care of that.”

“Well, come with me, anyway,” Brandon urged. “Granting all that you say, it is better than living under another man's name—and your father is not

immortal. Or, if I cannot persuade you to return, then go to some other Colony, under your own name, or, at least, under no other man's, and settle down."

De Lysle laughed. "I like the danger of it, just as you liked the danger that was Long-Sword's."

"But, having come to my senses, I am going to get away from Long-Sword, and become, once more, a reputable member of society."

"You can go back—you have never, to society's knowledge, broken with her. You simply disappeared. Society knows me, however, for a criminal."

"Society has a short memory—she has forgotten, long ago."

"Well, I have ten days to consider before your ship sails," said De Lysle.

"And will you consider—honestly consider?" asked Brandon.

"I will—or I will play you whether I go or whether I stay."

"Still the gambler!" commented Brandon. "Well, if it come to the pinch, we will play—but what is the good in playing—except on the voyage home?"

XVI

THE CRESCENT AND THE STAR

WHITEHALL, the country residence of Governor Sharpe, lay on the banks of the Chesapeake, about ten miles north of Annapolis.

It was originally part of the Colonel Greenberry estate, and was willed by him to St. Margaret's Church, Westminster Parish. Colonel Sharpe, when he decided to make his home permanently in America, purchased it, after considerable difficulty with the vestry, and proceeded to erect thereon, three years before, a most commodious and handsome mansion.

The large central house, of English brick, square and of two-and-a-half stories, stands on a slight—a very slight—eminence, from which a long esplanade of velvety lawn, set with flowers and shrubbery, led down to the blue waters of the Bay, a quarter of a mile distant.

It was but one room in depth, and three in width—the entrances from the Bay and the land sides, being into a large middle room, which served as both reception and living room—with the dining-room on the one side and the drawing-room on the other. They all had great, high ceilings, beautifully carved, with cornices, mantels and doorways to match, and panelled walls, set off by soft-toned

hangings. And over the fire-place in the dining-room, hung a portrait of the Governor, himself, in the red dress-uniform of a Lieutenant-Colonel of the 20th Foot.

(It hangs there to-day—just as he left it when he returned to England, and gave Whitehall to John Ridout, his Secretary—showing a tall man, and a heavy, with a high forehead, and fine, well-bred face, of a florid complexion, and grave eyes that searched without repelling.

He was a good man, in a measure a great man, and, yet, he failed. Not signally, as most of our governors of Colonial days, but failed, none-the-less. It was no easy thing to handle the people of Maryland, at the period of the beginning of the breaking, yet he was popular as no other governor was popular, even, in America. He was Commander-in-chief of the Colonial forces, in the French War, and, for far less services, he should have received the well deserved reward of Knighthood, and a pension—the pension, at the very least, ought to have been forthcoming. Instead—nothing: not even his Sovereign's thanks. He did his full duty, and much more—but he failed. What was the reason? Possibly, somewhere, among the musty records of the Colonial office, there is an explanation—possibly, some cabinet minister was unfriendly—possibly, the young King was, even then, exhibiting his narrowness and his bigotry. Who can tell!)

The tall pillars, which now mark the entrance on

the Bay-side, were not in the original construction—Governor Sharpe never saw them; and his race track and the servants' quarters, which he placed on the level ground to the rear, beyond the wide sweep of turf, have vanished. The dungeons remain, however, beneath the main house, and, in one of the wings of the mansion, the Colonel's quarters are practically unchanged.

It was a fine, old place, typical of Maryland and Annapolis, in the days of the Colony—of her lavishness and good cheer, her hospitality and her courtesy, her gallantry and her fame. Those days have ended—the Eastern and the Western Shores know no more the life that once was theirs. Their glory has departed—their sun has set. Whitehall, and all its fellows, are but the waifs of a dead past.

It was otherwise, however, on this August morning, in the year of Grace 1766. The Governor was in presence—and all that life, and action, and a master-hand could effect, were in evidence.

His excellency had been down to the race track, for an early morning inspection. The horses had been put through the paces, under his own eyes—and blame and praise were given indiscriminately. He had a rare gift for picking the faults and the perfections in their training, and he let censure fall where due—nor minced his words.

“I tell you, Maynadier, Hanover promises well, damned well, indeed!” he said. “He has the wind

and the legs of the best of them, or I miss my guess. Sir Edward Parkington is no mean judge of horse-flesh; he has seen the fleetest we have at home, and he says Hanover is the king of them all."

"I hope he is, Colonel," said Maynadier. "You know, I have nothing entered against him."

"And jolly well glad you may be, my boy!" exclaimed the Colonel. "You will have the delight of seeing me win, and the pleasure of not seeing yourself beaten. Speaking of Parkington, what is this I hear of his attentions to Miss Marbury, and having a notion to settle in Maryland. You are more intimate with the Marburys than any one else, is there any truth in it?"

"I do not know—on that score, Miss Marbury has not taken me into her confidence."

The Governor regarded him questioningly.

"Why do you not marry the girl yourself?" he demanded, abruptly. "Give Rose Hill a mistress—it needs one."

"I will not gainsay that it needs one," said Maynadier, with an amused smile.

"Neither will you gainsay that Judith Marbury would fill the place, admirably. There is style and breeding about that girl, Maynadier. I like her much, damned much! Why should she marry an Englishman? Sir Edward is all right, I suppose—but he has only his manners and Baltimore's letters to vouch for him. And not much credit in the letters, God knows!"

Maynadier was puzzled. Could it be the Governor was not aware that Parkington was not Parkington?—was he not in the secret?—was he being imposed on, also?

"Sometimes, I have thought," he ventured, "that Parkington is not quite what he seemed—that he is playing a part."

"Playing a part!" Colonel Sharpe ejaculated. "I do not understand."

Maynadier looked at him, a moment, in silence.

"You do not understand?" he asked, slowly. "Do you honestly mean it?"

"Mean it! Of course I mean it. What do *you* mean?"

"Have I permission to speak plainly?"

"You have," said the Governor—"right from the shoulder. What is it?"

"Is it possible, sir, you do not know that Sir Edward Parkington is an assumed name—that this man is *not* Parkington?"

The Colonel stared at him, incredulously.

"Not Parkington?" he marveled. "Not Parkington?"

Maynadier bowed. "To my certain knowledge, not Parkington."

"But his letters—they were authentic—they were in Baltimore's own hand!"

"I do not dispute them," said Maynadier, "but I have met Sir Edward Parkington, in London——"

"And this is not he?"

"This is not he.—The true Parkington is quite the reverse of this man. He is short, stout, ruddy, and bald."

"You know this as a fact—of your own knowledge?" demanded the Colonel.

"I do. I saw Sir Edward Parkington a number of times. I talked with him at least twice, at White's. Moreover, he was an intimate of Baltimore. I cannot be mistaken—unless, of course, there be two of the name, which is unlikely."

"Decidedly unlikely," the Governor agreed. He took a turn back and forth on the grass. "When did you know this?" he asked, suddenly.

"From the moment I saw him."

"And why did you not disclose it—why did you keep silent?"

"It was at the races, the day after he arrived. I saw you bring him up and present him to Miss Stirling; a little later, when I met him, and was given his name as Parkington, I assumed there was some reason for it—when I heard of his letters, I was sure of it. It was no affair of mine, I thought, to meddle in affairs of State. You had vouched for him—that was sufficient."

The Colonel nodded. He dug his stick into the turf and considered.

"It is a bit awkward," he said. "He has been accepted, by the Province, on the strength of my

vouchment—and I introduced him on the strength of his letters—and the letters are authentic——”

“Hence he is authentic!” laughed Maynadier.

“I am justified in so assuming,” the Colonel continued. “On the other hand, I can have him thrown out as an impostor, and proclaim him as such—but, what is the profit? The man is plainly of the class he masquerades; he has borne himself, naturally, as one of them; he has committed no improprieties.—I am at a loss what to do—whether to demand an explanation, or to let things rest, for the present. . . . If I thought he would soon depart, I should be tempted to do nothing. And, yet, where did he get those letters?—Did the real Parkington give them to him for a purpose? did he steal them? or is not Parkington in it, at all—is it some of Baltimore’s doings?” He threw up his hands, in doubt.

“There is the gentleman, now,” said Maynadier, who was standing facing the house. “He is coming this way.”

The Governor turned, and watched him approach.

“Hum! damned fine looking!” he muttered.

“He could give the real Parkington all the weight, and then beat him in a canter. Confound it, Maynadier, I like the fellow!”

“So do I,” said Maynadier. “You cannot help liking him. He has the qualities that appeal to a man—there are a certain dash, and verve, and light-heartedness about him that are very taking.”

"The compliments of the morning to your Excellency—and to you, Mr. Maynadier," said Parkington, with a graceful bow—"and, if I may, to the horses, as well."

"A man is known by the company he keeps, as Governor Ogle said, when he built the stable in his front yard, on King George Street!" laughed Colonel Sharpe.

"He was a true sportsman," said Maynadier. "His horses and his dogs next after his family. It was the sure sign of his British blood."

"Colonel Sharpe," said Parkington, presently, "I want to ask a favor?"

"It is granted, before it is asked."

"Which is a trifle rash, sir; I may ask for a hundred guineas."

"They will be forthcoming, if you do."

"I will not impose on good nature," smiled Parkington. "But what I do want, is your permission to go to Annapolis, and bring back a friend, Sir Charles Brandon, who came two days ago. He would have paid his respects sooner, to your Excellency, but the Assembly took all your time."

"Go, by all means!" said the Governor; "but you should have informed me of his intended coming, so I could have had him down."

"I did not know he was closer than London," Parkington protested, "until he walked into the Coffee-house, the other night, and found me—and he was as surprised as I."

"Bring him down!" said the Colonel, heartily.
—"Take the pinnace and bring him down.—How long does he expect to stay in Annapolis?"

"Until the next ship sails for England."

"Good—it will be a pleasure to have him."

"I did not mean to ask for an invitation for——"

"Tut! tut! we shall be delighted. A visiting Englishman is a boon—like yourself."

Parkington turned back to the house. Colonel Sharpe watched him, until he disappeared through the doorway, then, he swung around toward Maynadier.

"Either the plot grows thicker, or else it is cleared altogether. Either there are two Sir Edward Parkingtons or else Brandon is an abettor of the impostor. Well, we will wait and see."

As they went slowly in, Constable overtook them. He had been down at the far end of the track, putting a green hunter over the jumps.

"Constable!" said Colonel Sharpe, "have you ever met Sir Charles Brandon, Parkington's friend?"

"Yes—I was at the Coffee-house with Parkington, the other night, when Brandon walked in. They were too astonished, for a moment, to speak. Then it was: 'Parkington, on my soul!' 'Brandon, by all that's holy!' It was a very pretty meeting—such genuine friendship."

"Hum!" with a look at Maynadier. "Well, we are going to have him here. Parkington has gone up in the pinnace for him."

"Brandon is a particular friend of Sir Edward?" asked Maynadier.

"If you had seen the meeting, you would have thought so!" laughed Constable. "Not effusive, mind you—just genuine, pleased surprise. The sort I should have, if I were to meet Paca, unexpectedly, in London."

"It will be safe to put them, then, in the same room?" the Colonel observed.

"I should judge so—though Herford and I will move out, if you want to give him a separate room."

"By no means! By no means!" said the Colonel, heartily.—"Well, what do you make of it?" when Constable had gone on. "He addressed him as Parkington, and the meeting seems to be a mutual surprise. Pretty fair evidence, besides his own, that he is the genuine Sir Edward, is it not?"

"Yes, it is!" said Maynadier, slowly; "but not conclusive. I should like to know, whether they had met before, and arranged this Coffee-house affair."

The Governor thought a moment. "It is possible—it depends on when Brandon arrived in Annapolis, and whether Parkington had an opportunity to see him. I will dispatch a man, at once, to investigate."

Later in the day, he summoned Maynadier to his

rooms. His coat and waistcoat were off, and he was enjoying, at his ease, his long-stemmed pipe. He motioned Maynadier to one, also, and waited until he had filled and lighted it.

"I have investigated," he said, "and there was no collusion, no pre-arrangement of the meeting. Brandon arrived in Annapolis, at Reynolds' Tavern, about seven o'clock that evening, from Frederick, he had supper, and then retired to his room, where he remained until near eleven. He then went out, walking in the direction of Church Street—when he returned, an hour or so later, Parkington accompanied him."

"And Parkington?" said Maynadier.

"I left him, after supper, at my house, to go to the State House.—Old Moses, my butler, says he remained in the drawing-room, reading, until a little after ten, when he left, to go to the Coffee-house. And Sparrow says, he reached there about half-after-ten."

"He was not to Reynolds' Tavern in the meantime?" Maynadier asked.

"No—in that point Reynolds is very positive. He says that Brandon had no visitors in the evening."

"Then, there must be two Sir Edward Parkingtons, and both friends of Baltimore," said Maynadier. "It is entirely possible, of course, but most unlikely."

"You still hold to it that we are entertaining an impostor?" asked the Governor.

"No—not exactly—I am ready to be convinced either way. In the interim, I should let the letters decide. He presented them and they are genuine; they, and his conduct, will have justified your recognition."

"His conduct has been quite exemplary—I have have not heard anything but the best reports of him. He does not, even at times, drink to excess; he does not gossip; and he pays his debts without being dunned, which is much to his credit. He borrowed two hundred pounds from me, after his arrival—having lost everything in the shipwreck, you remember—and repaid it, the other day, immediately upon his return to Annapolis. And he apologized for keeping it so long. Damned decent, I call it!"

Richard Maynadier pulled on his pipe, and gazed through the windows, across the esplanade to the dock, where a ship had just let go her anchor.

"Yes!" he said, "yes! decidedly decent.—It is a pity some of our young men do not emulate him." His eyes came back to the Governor's. "Do you happen to have any of the money handy, sir?"

"You mean, the money he paid me?—I will lend it to you gladly, Maynadier."

"I do not want to borrow, thank you, Colonel," was the smiling answer. "I want simply to see it—the coins, I mean."

The Governor turned to his writing desk, unlocked a drawer, and, taking out a bag, passed it over.

"It is just as he gave it to me," he said; "indeed, I did not even count it, I took it on faith.—You do not think he tricked me, Maynadier?"

"Oh, no—not you. I want to see——"

He emptied the gold into a shining heap, on the table before him, and spread it out with his hands. There were guineas, pistoles, and Spanish doubloons, in all, making up the two hundred pounds.

"I want to see if there are any pieces which might be remembered—any—with—Ah!"—he picked out a doubloon, with a star and a crescent cut deep upon its face. "I wonder if Marbury can by any chance recall—I beg your pardon, Colonel! Marbury had some gold stolen during the house-party, at Hedgely Hall. He kept no list, but he might recognize this one, it is sufficiently distinctive, surely."

The Governor blew a cloud of smoke toward the ceiling and watched it slowly vanish.

"You think that Parkington may be guilty?" he said—"that we may catch a thief, as well as an impostor? Very good! you have added a motive for his imposition. If you can prove it, we will give the sheriff a job with the halter. Where is Marbury?"

"He was in Annapolis, yesterday—he came that

far with the young people. I will go up and see him."

"No—I will send for him.—I suppose there was card playing at Hedgely Hall?"

"Every night, while I was there, and I take it every night."

"Then, even if Marbury recognizes the coin, it will prove little, for Parkington can say he won it at cards."

"True," said Maynadier; "but the coin, being in his possession, raises a presumption against him, which he will have to lift by more than merely saying, 'it was won at cards.' The trouble, however, is, that Marbury may refuse to help—he is averse to stirring up trouble which may result in nothing. In fact, he told no one but me of the theft.—I think it would be better if I went to Annapolis—and I will go at once."

An hour later, his barge ran into the landing at the foot of Marbury's garden, and he went straight up to the house, which stood on Duke of Gloucester Street.

Marbury, himself, came down the steps to welcome him.

"Why, Maynadier!" he exclaimed, "this is a pleasant surprise—I thought you were at his Excellency's."

"I am just from Whitehall," said Maynadier. He glanced around. "Can we be overheard?"

Marbury shook his head, "I am alone, except for one servant, and he is gone off until supper."

Maynadier put his hand in his pocket, and drew out the doubloon.

"Do you recognize this gold piece?" he asked, without preliminary.

Marbury took it—looked at it, carefully, an instant—then answered.

"I do—it is the one piece I recall seeing, when I counted the pirate's gold. It did not occur to me before—but, now, I remember it. It was the last piece in one of the bags.—Yes, I recollect the star and crescent, perfectly. Where did you get it?"

"From his Excellency, Governor Sharpe," said Maynadier.

"And from whom did he get it?"

"From Sir Edward Parkington."

"He is sure?"

"Perfectly—it was a repayment of two hundred pounds he had borrowed, and was still in the bag, uncounted. This was the one coin, of them all, which I thought you might have noted."

"And you assume that Parkington is the thief?" asked Marbury.

"At least, it acquits your servants."

"I never thought them guilty."

"And it calls for an explanation from Sir Edward," Maynadier said.

Marbury considered—frowning down at his heavy shoes, the while.

“I am not disposed to go further into it,” he said, at length. “I regret that I did not tell you so more promptly.—I have put you to needless trouble.—I am very sorry—I apologize.—This was a most peculiar thief, Maynadier, a most peculiar thief! He returned the money, the evening before the house-party broke—it was on my desk when I went up to bed.”

“And nothing with it, of course?”

“Yes; a slip of paper, cut from some book, was pinned to the bag, with these words printed on it:—‘For this relief much thanks.’ I shall drop the matter, Maynadier.”

“You do not care even to identify the coin?”

“No—the money has been returned, it may not have been taken feloniously. I shall prefer to believe that it was borrowed, in view of the prompt restoration. Moreover, I am leaving for the Hall on the morrow; I will not bother. Let it rest, Maynadier! let it rest! You have some idea of morals, or society, on your mind; I have not. That it was some of the guests, there can be no dispute—but, which one, I care not to find out. Parkington, you think?—but there was much money changed hands around the card table, and he, I believe, was largely winner. So, possession of the doubloon is not conclusive. At

the worst, it calls, only, for an explanation—and I see no profit even in an explanation; he will be leaving us, presently, for England, never to return. Oh! let it rest, Maynadier! let it rest!”

“My dear Marbury,” said Maynadier, “I am here for two reasons:—first, because you asked me to inform you if I found any clue——”

“I know, sir—I apologize for my neglect to tell you of the restitution.”

“And, second, because there has arisen another question—a serious question—with respect to Sir Edward Parkington. It will be handled by the Governor, himself, if handled at all; and I wanted to know, whether he may use your identification of this stolen coin, if it be deemed essential?”

“*If it be deemed essential*, I have no objection,” said Marbury, after a little consideration—“but do not use it unless it is,” he added. “I would not risk doing Parkington an injustice, he was unusually courteous to me, and considerate, also.”

“And you appreciate courtesy and consideration,” thought Maynadier, “because you have had so little shown you in life. The public would never believe it!” What he said, was: “I understand. It will be used only as a last resort. Indeed, Colonel Sharpe may deem it inexpedient to meddle with the matter, at all.” He arose to go.

“Why not remain for supper,” asked Marbury.

“Not to-night,” said Maynadier. “I must back to Whitehall.”

They went down the stairs together; at the foot, Maynadier suddenly halted.

"Marbury," he said, "have I your permission to marry Judith, if she be willing?"

"You have," Marbury answered, a gratified smile flashing, for an instant, across his impassive face—"and she is a queer girl, if she does not take you." Then he laughed. "But, for the Lord's sake! man, be a little less sudden when you ask *her*. You well nigh took *my* breath."

XVII

A LETTER AND A CONFESSION

SIR EDWARD PARKINGTON and Sir Charles Brandon arrived at Whitehall just before supper, and were greeted by the Governor and his guests on the esplanade.

Brandon was dignified yet affable, he was properly appreciative of his Excellency's courtesy, a bit diffident about imposing upon his hospitality, and thoroughly considerate in everything; in short, the well-bred gentleman—natural, free from affectations, and, apparently, sincere.

So he impressed Colonel Sharpe; so he impressed every one. He would be an addition to the company, they all agreed, when he and Parkington had gone to their room to dress.

The Nelson was arrived that morning from England, and the Governor's mail had been sent down by the pinnace. In the bag, were several communications for Miss Stirling, which he passed over with a jocular remark. Excusing herself, she retired to a quiet corner of the library to read them. While thus engaged, Captain Herford entered, and tried to engage her in talk; but she sent him away, rather petulantly, and then, hiding herself in a window embrasure, went on with her reading.

Two of the letters were of casual interest—the

doings of the writers on their country estates—and were not remarkable either for correct spelling or polished diction. The third and last, however, was of better stuff.

It was from Lady Catherwood, written from London,—before she had received Miss Stirling's letter to her, of course—and had in it much gossip, a little scandal, and, then, just before the close, was this:—

“There is an interesting Piece of Gossip, which I all but forgot to tell you. It seems, Lord Baltimore has tired of certain Gentlemen, who are his particular Toad-eaters, and has taken Means to get rid of them.

“One has gone to Maryland, with letters of Introduction to the Governor, your Uncle, trusting to make his way with the Gentlemen of the Colony, and, incidentally, to make as much Money off them as they will permit—which, I Dare say, will not be Excessive, for a more Unattractive little Rogue it would be hard to find outside a jail. He is small, and fat, and bald, and is scarcely ever Sober, when he has some one to pay for the Liquor; and, naturally, he is a Vile little Beast in other ways—Comprenez vous? A thoroughly disreputable fellow, Catherwood says, and one whom Baltimore ought to be Ashamed to send his Colony; but Baltimore is not Ashamed of anything, save leading a decent life.

"I give you this, for your own Information—not because I think there is any likelihood of your falling a Victim to Sir Edward's wiles—but to warn you, and also Colonel Sharpe, if you think well to Meddle in his business. The name of this wretch is Sir Edward Parkington——"

Martha Stirling read the last line thrice, to make sure she saw aright.

"Sir Edward Parkington!" she reflected—"is small, and fat, and bald, and scarcely ever sober! and a vile little beast in other ways—*Comprenez vous?* Yes, my dear, I comprehend. And what is more, I comprehend that he is not *our* Sir Edward. Between the leaving London and the arrival at Annapolis, there was a change of men.—But the letters of introduction are the same—how did they happen to change hands?

She sat a while, thinking deeply. Should she tell the Governor? Should she preserve the secret, tell no one? Should she demand the truth of Parkington himself, and let his story determine her future action? She heard him and Brandon descend the stairs, and go out on the esplanade. Brandon! he knew the secret—he knew that Parkington was an impostor—he knew *all*. She had heard Constable's story of the meeting at the Coffee-house—the surprise shown. Bah! it was prearranged, determined upon beforehand; a play, acted for the express benefit of the onlookers.—Should she block

it, now, walk out and, before the whole company, read Lady Catherwood's letter? It would be effective—far more so than his play at the Coffee-house. In fact, it would be conclusive.—Yet, he had always been very gallant to her, very devoted, very sympathetic. (She looked out through the window.) Yes, and he was a gentleman, too. No man had such manners, such grace, such ease of bearing, otherwise.

The longer she looked, the more her heart misgave her. She could not do it. She would wait until after supper, take him for a walk, down to the water, and get him to confess the masquerade and the reason for it. She refused to think that there was any wrong intended. He was better than the real Sir Edward, a thousand times better. And she liked him—liked him more than any man she had ever met, save only Richard Maynadier; and Richard Maynadier (she had known it since the night he kissed her, at Hedgely Hall) was not for her. There was no love in his lips, though there had been plenty of ardor.

A little twinge of bitterness took possession of her. Why was she born poor?—why could she not have had rank and riches instead of beauty?

Presently, she saw the butler go out and announce supper; she arose and joined the party as they came trooping in.

She had Parkington and Brandon on either hand, and she watched them, covertly, all through the

meal, trying to pick some flaw in their bearing, something that would not be quite right in their behaviour. But she failed—as she had felt sure she would. They had only to be natural, to be themselves, to ring true. Parkington he was not, and Brandon might be false, also, but, assuredly, they came of the stock they professed—and, may be, of better.

“I have got something to say to you, when you join us,” she whispered to Sir Edward, as the ladies arose to retire. “Don’t be overlong.”

“I will come at once,” he said, as he drew back her chair.

“No—in a half hour. I will be down in the rose-walk, you may join me there.”

“On the instant!” he exclaimed—and watched her as she went slowly down the table, flinging a bantering word, here and there, the men bowing, and smiling, and flinging it back again.

“Yes, you may well look at her,” said Brandon. “She has the beauty and grace of the best of them at Court. She is the Governor’s niece, I take it?”

Parkington nodded. “But she is poor—and, I think, has a little too much morals to get on at Court.”

“She will not let her face and figure purchase her place, you mean? I see.—You have decided to go home?” he asked suddenly.

“I am strongly tempted, Brandon, strongly tempted.”

"And do you want to be sure of the old Earl's forgiveness?"

"I should not refuse it," said Parkington, smiling.

"Then, marry Miss Stirling—she can wheedle him, I warrant; and, besides, he will be forced to admit that you have given some evidence of reform by doing it."

"And Miss Stirling, shall I carry her off by force and marry her, or simply drug her!" laughed Parkington.

"Neither—tell her the truth. I will be much surprised, if she does not jump at the chance to get the son of the Earl of Doncaster, even though he is not the heir. Moreover, man, she is fond of you; one did not need to do more than see her at table, this evening, to appreciate it."

"You are fertile of schemes," was the answer.

"I am—and they are usually good schemes; it is an indispensable requisite of the pirate business."

Parkington drew over the port, and replenished his glass.

"But it risks everything on the Earl," he objected. "If he refuse to be lenient—if he prosecutes?"

"He will not."

"I must think over it—and, then, marriage is a serious question, my friend, a serious question!"

"Is it any more serious to marry Miss Stirling, than it is to marry Miss Marbury?" asked Brandon.

"Well, in the one case, my mind was made up."

"How about the lady's mind?"

"I admit I do not know."

"Was it she in blue and pink, at the other end of the table?"

"The same—she sat next to Constable."

Brandon laughed lightly, "I am a stranger, here," he said, "but there is only one, in this company, who has any attraction for her:—the tall, grave, exceedingly good-looking man of middle age across the table. Maynadier, I think the Governor called him."

"He is only a friend of the family—the best friend, likely—nothing more."

"I am not answering as to him," said Brandon. "You are not thinking of marrying Mr. Maynadier, I take it." He pushed back his chair with the others, and arose. "Consider it—sound Miss Stirling—see if she be likely to accept. At any rate, I tell you, again, Miss Marbury is not for you—and neither is residence in Maryland."

"Very good—I shall sound her, and tell you how it appears. I have an appointment with her, now," said Parkington.

On the way out, Miss Marbury hailed him.

"Come here!" she said, with pretty peremptoriness. "Come here, and tell me how you are—I have not seen you for a long, long time."

"And my days have been dreary as winter in

consequence, full of rain and melancholy," replied Parkington.

"Then, cheer up, Sir Mournful—the sun is shining; you may bask in its rays a while."

He offered her his arm.

"To the Bay and back again?" he asked.

"Why, back again?" she laughed.

"Because I thought it the only way to get you. But, if you will," (bending down) "it shall be to Annapolis and St. Anne's Rector, ere we come back again."

She looked up at him with merry eyes—a charming picture in the moonlight.

"Let us first go to the Bay," she said; "perhaps, we shall not care to go farther."

And Martha Stirling, from the rose-walk, saw them go. And surprise grew slowly to amazement, and then—as the minutes fled, and they returned not—the surprise changed into anger, sharp and sudden. And she left the rose-walk, and hastened to the Governor.

She found him in his apartment, in converse with Richard Maynadier. Both men arose, when she entered, and the latter made a move to retire. She stopped him.

"Just a moment, Mr. Maynadier," she said—"I want only to give this letter to Colonel Sharpe. It contains some information which it seems well he should have at once.—It is from Lady Catherwood, sir," she added; "it came this evening, and, though

only a woman's letter, this part," (indicating)
"will prove very interesting reading."

She handed the letter to him, shot Maynadier a bewitching smile, dropped them both a curtsy, and was gone.

"Your pardon, a moment!" said the Governor.
. . . . At the end, he passed the letter across to Maynadier, and his face was troubled.

"Miss Stirling was right," he said. "But it is more than interesting—unfortunate, I should term it."

Maynadier read it carefully before answering—then, he put it slowly down.

"What course will you pursue?" he asked.
"The evidence is all but conclusive, now."

The Governor sent cloud after cloud of smoke ceiling-ward.

"I shall demand an explanation," he replied;
"lay down the proofs, and give him a chance to disprove; and do it quietly—there is no need to proclaim my error."

"You are not at fault—the letters were authentic," said Maynadier.

"Possibly not—but I shall bear the blame, nevertheless, of having made the imposition possible. I do not like it! Maynadier, I do not like it! If I thought he would depart with Brandon, I would——" he broke off and shook his head in indecision. "He has done no one, so far as we know, an injury—other than to enter their houses

under a false name. He has, even then, compensated for his entertainment by his genialness and his courtesy. It will raise a nasty scandal, and accomplish no real good. If there were any crime, for which he was responsible, it would be quite different. I grant you, he played cards for a high stake, and usually with success, but no one accuses him of cheating—and there were those who were willing to play.”

“And, in addition, you like him!” laughed Maynadier.

“Yes, I like him—I reckon that does influence my judgment.”

“But the fact remains, that he is *not* Sir Edward Parkington. How will you answer, if it ever become known—even after he has departed? ‘I knew it,’ or, ‘I did not know’?”

“I knew it.”

“Then, how explain your failure to unmask him?”

“I should decline to explain,” said the Governor.

“Such would be your privilege. I admit the matter (as it appears now) is purely one of ethics, and expediency—and there are things to be said on both sides.”

“How would you decide it, Maynadier?”

“I do not know—I am glad it is not necessary that I decide it.”

Colonel Sharpe flung his pipe on the table, scattering the hot ashes broadcast.

"Damn it! Maynadier, I do not know what to do!" he exclaimed. "I shall put it off until morning; sleep, sometimes, solves problems."

Maynadier arose. "And Miss Stirling," he said—"she will not disclose what is in the letter?"

"No—but to make sure, I will caution her, at once," and, seizing his cane, he hurried out.

"Where have you been, sir?" Miss Marbury inquired, as Maynadier came face to face with her in the drawing-room doorway.

"Not where I wanted to be," he said.

"And where is that?"

"Where I am, now."

"A very pretty place," she answered, with a glance around; "but I should think one, out of doors on such a night, were vastly preferable."

"With you in it?" he asked.

She seemed to hesitate, watching him, the while, through half-closed eyes.

"If you wish, sir—wait until I get a fan. . . . Now, I am ready."

"I may select the place?" he said.

"You may," laughing; "will it be in the centre of the party, or just to one side?"

"A little to one side," he answered—"by as far as the Bay is from the house."

"Goodness, Dick, you are growing very venturesome—next you will be inviting me to go where Sir Edward——"

"Yes," he said—"where Sir Edward?"

"No—no, that would be telling."

"You used to tell me everything," he said.

"Yes—before I grew up and put on the ways of society."

"And how long *has* that been?"

"Since the last night of the party at Hedgely Hall," she answered.

"You mean, since you saw me kiss Miss Stirling?"

"Perhaps."

"It was a mistake, I admit it!"

"A mistake to be caught?" she laughed. "I grant it."

"Yes—a mistake to be caught—and a mistake to kiss her."

"Only when you have been caught! No! no! Dick, you cannot make me think it ever a mistake to kiss a pretty girl—and the girl be willing."

"You have learned the ways of society very thoroughly."

"I have had excellent teachers."

"Teachers?" he inflected—"there have been more than myself?"

"Monsieur! am I a pretty girl? Think you that I have never been—that no one has ever wanted to kiss me?"

"You cannot do it, Judith!" he laughed.

"Cannot do what?"

"Make me believe that any one ever——"

"Wanted to kiss me? Thank you, Mr. Maynardier!" with a toss of her head.

"No, that any one ever kissed you—until this moment."

And straightway he took her in his arms.

She pushed him from her, at last, and sprang back.

"Just what do you mean, sir?" she demanded—"just what do you mean?"

She was making a desperate effort to appear indignant.

"Mean?" he exclaimed, "you know what it means! Judith, you love me, don't you, sweetheart?"

"Am I to take that as a proposal?" she asked.

"Surely, dear——"

"Then, do you not think, sir, it would be a trifle more appropriate to confess your own feelings, rather than to inquire as to mine?"

"But you know *I* love you!"

"You have never taken the trouble to tell me."

"My lips told you?"

"I did not hear them."

"When I kissed you?"

"I am not familiar with the language, sir," retreating.

He stopped.

"I love you, Judith—will you marry me?" he said, humbly.

"That is better, sir," she replied; "more accord-

ing to custom. Have you spoken to my father?"

"I have his permission—if you are willing?"

She laughed—a joyous, happy laugh.

"Why, Dick, I think I have been always willing," she said, and went to him. "It is you—who—have—not—known."

The last words were whispered and broken.

.
"You are frightfully hard on one's coiffure, dear," she said, presently, putting him aside, and stepping back. "Did you disarrange Miss Stirling's so completely?"

He surveyed her critically.

"Rather more so, I think," he answered.

She made a little grimace.

"You wretch!" she exclaimed. "You need not have confessed it!"

"But you wanted the truth," with a sly smile.

"No, I did not want the truth!—No, sir! go away—I will not! Not another one until we say good night. Is it a bargain?"

"I suppose so—yes, it is a bargain," he replied.

"Very well, sir—now, because you are so good, I shall tell you a secret."

"A sugar plum for the child!" he laughed.

"A man always wants a sugar plum for being good," she reflected.

"And the secret?" he said.

"It has to do with Sir Edward Parkington," she answered.—"We walked down to the water,

after supper, and he was—very devoted,” (with a sidelong glance at Maynadier).

“I should hope so,” he remarked.

“He took my hand——”

“Huh!” said Maynadier.

“And commented on the contour of my cheek——”

“Huh!” said Maynadier, again.

“And the beauty of my hair——”

No response!

“And the flawlessness of my complexion——”

A savage cut at the grass, with his walking stick!

“And he was good enough to say my mouth was a perfect bow——”

Another cut with the walking stick, more savage!

“Just made for kisses——”

“Yes!” said Maynadier, and stopped.

“And then,——” she went on.

“I suppose he kissed you!” Maynadier exclaimed.

“No!” she said—“No, he only proposed—Oh! he did it much nicer than you, Dick! No man could ever have done it better.”

“And what did you do?” said Maynadier, frowning.

“What do you think I did?”

He made a gesture, signifying that she might have done anything.

She laughed softly, and slipped her hand through his arm.

"You are a little, just a little jealous, dear,—confess it?" she said.

"No—I am not exactly jealous—but, oh hang it! Judith, what *did* you do?"

"You remember the evening at Hedgely Hall, when you told me that Sir Edward was not Sir Edward?" she asked. "Well, it happened he had been growing a little ardent about that time, and I thought I would try an experiment. (It was not, I reckon, an altogether nice thing to do—but I did it; and I am telling it only to you, Dick, remember!) I drew him on—rather, I let him draw himself on; he needed very little encouragement. And I did it, because, it seemed to me, when he proposed, he also would have to disclose his real name, and the reason for the masquerade. Nothing would kill a prospect of marriage so effectively as concealment."

"That can be true only if he intended to remain in America," observed Maynadier.

"And he had already sounded me, tentatively, on that very idea," she answered. "I thought it was all fol-de-rol, at first; but I concluded differently, when he deliberately referred to it several times, and insisted that he was considering it very seriously. At all events, we played the game. We made fair progress at Hedgely Hall——"

"Yes, I rather think you did——"

"Particularly, when I saw how rapidly you had progressed with Miss Stirling," she retorted.—
"And we did better at Montpelier,"—she went on—

“and still better at Sotterly. But he never quite reached the point—he came up almost to it, many times, then veered off, as gracefully as ship before the wind. I could see, or thought I could, what was in his mind. He was not quite sure, whether it was safe, yet, to doff his borrowed identity, either because he was not quite certain of himself, or because he was not quite sure of me. Such was the situation, when I left Sotterly, being called suddenly to Hedgely Hall.

“I did not see him, again, until this evening—and, at once, when we started on our walk after supper, I noticed the change. He was going to declare himself; indeed, we had not got to the rose-walk, until he had suggested, in a laughing way, that we continue on to Annapolis and St. Anne’s Rectory on Hanover Street. . . . When we came back, half an hour or so later, I had the story. He did not bind me to secrecy. He was the high-bred gentleman in that, as he always has been with me—he even told me I should tell you, if I cared to do so. He assumed that you were—the one, Dick. And this is his story:—

“He is the son of the Earl of Doncaster—a second son. He disgraced himself, somehow, and, to avoid prosecution, fled to this country. On the voyage, he became acquainted with Sir Edward Parkington—their ship went down, near St. Mary’s, during a storm, and all the rest on board were lost. He and Parkington’s dead body were cast up on

the sands, together. He took Parkington's letters, presented them to Governor Sharpe as his own,—and that is all.—He is going back to England with his friend, Sir Charles Brandon.”

“And how did Sir Charles——” Maynadier began; then, he stopped. (He was about to ask, how Brandon, knowing his rightful name, yet called him Parkington at the Coffee-house, when, according to report, it was a genuine surprise)—“how do you know,” he amended, “that the confession is not false—how do you know that he is the son of the Earl of Doncaster, or that Brandon is Brandon?”

“I do not know,” she answered—“more than this: he is a gentleman—and I believe his story.”

“The tenderness which a woman always feels for the man who has proposed to her,” thought Maynadier, looking down at her with steady eyes.

“You are not angry, Dick?” she said.

He laughed joyously.

“Angry, sweetheart!” he said. “No! no! but let us forget Parkington, and Brandon, and all else, and talk of you, and Rose Hill, and the Mistress Richard Maynadier that is to be.”

XVIII

THE BROKEN RENDEZVOUS

THE idea, of testing the matter out with Miss Marbury, had presented itself so suddenly, that Parkington had—he must confess it to himself—forgotten for the moment, his engagement to meet Miss Stirling.

In truth, it did not recur to him until they had returned from the water-front, after his proposal was rejected.

Instantly, he retraced his steps, hoping against hope that she was still waiting, or, better still, that she had not kept the rendezvous.

The first contingency failed—the rose-walk was deserted; if Miss Stirling had been there, she was gone, and he would have to pay the penalty. The other contingency was what he prayed for, most fervently. When one is about to ask a woman to be his wife, it is unfortunate if he has to start the interview explaining away his short-comings.

He strolled through the other walks—the peony, the mock-orange, and the golden-rose, but without success. She was not in any of them. He turned back to the house, a little discouraged. Now, that he had decided to go home, he had also decided that he wanted Miss Stirling to go back with him—and this was not a propitious beginning.

He met Brandon coming down the steps.

"What success?" he said.

"You mean, with Miss Stirling?" Parkington asked.

The other nodded.

"Poor," was the answer. "I forgot the rendezvous."

"Have you made your peace?"

"I have not found her."

"You are a careless fellow, De Lysle—I saw you go off with Miss Marbury. Why did you do it?"

"To determine whether I wanted to remain in Maryland."

"And you determined?"

"Yes!" with a faint laugh. "I determined to go back."

Brandon slipped an arm through his, and led him down to the esplanade.

"You proposed to Miss Marbury, I assume?" he said.

"I did."

"And she refused you!"

"She did."

"And you told her, in your infatuated ignorance, that you are not Parkington—that you are an impostor?"

"I did."

Brandon smiled, mockingly.

"She will not repeat it," Parkington averred.

"Think you so?" said Brandon. "Well, I have

not the trust in womankind which you seem to have suddenly acquired. The sooner our ship sails, now, the better."

"Wherefore?"

"For several wherefores—where was your head, man, that you should have been guilty of this folly? She will not keep your secret—the woman is not born who could keep a secret so interesting. She will babble. And, then, trouble. Think you, they will believe your present story? Having once confessed to living a lie, you are a liar always—they will suspect whatever you tell. You might prove you are a De Lysle by the best of legal evidence, and they would doubt you, still. And it will not stop with *you*. They will question my identity as well: I will not be Sir Charles Brandon because you sponsored me. I am a suspicious character. I must account for myself. And that may lead to the Jolly Roger and the scaffold. For this knowledge and suspicion will be not among the people, in general, but with the greatest power in the Province: the Governor himself. And, though he is an easy-going, kindly gentleman, he can, I doubt not, be stern as death, if the occasion requires. You have violated his hospitality and his vouchment; I have accepted his hospitality, and must now prove my right to it or be kicked out—I must hang like a dog, if discovered."

"All of which," said Parkington, "is predicated upon Miss Marbury telling—in addition, you will

have to be identified. And the identification will be due solely to the fact that you and Long-Sword are the same individual—a condition for which *you* alone are responsible. And I might further remind you, that I had nothing to do with your coming to Annapolis—you rather complicated my affairs by appearing, as I told you at the time.”

“Well, do not let us quarrel,” said Brandon.

“Lord! man, I have no idea of quarreling!” laughed Parkington.—“It may have been a serious indiscretion to tell Miss Marbury, doubtless it was—but the fat is in the fire, now, and we must make the best of it. I may have weakened the authority of my identification of you, but nothing more. The Governor may be suspicious, but he cannot possibly connect you with Long-Sword. Marbury and Jamison are the only ones who might do it, and they are not likely to encounter you.”

“We will forget it,” said Brandon—“borrowing trouble only makes it the bigger when it comes. Nevertheless, I wish there were a ship sailing for home, to-morrow. Well, a man can die but once, thank God!—Do you intend to see Miss Stirling to-night?”

“Yes—I am searching for her, now.”

“And you will tell her the truth?”

“Only part of it—enough to test her. One woman is like another, according to your estimate, so, she shall know who I am, but not what I am—

that I am a son of the Earl of Doncaster, but not that I am in disgrace and disowned."

"You will stand a better chance for trust with Miss Stirling. She is an Englishwoman—she would likely keep an Earl's son's secret."

"Why should I not wait until your ship has sailed, before I tell her—then, if she babbles, it will not affect you?"

"No," said Brandon; "since you have told it to Miss Marbury you must tell it to the other. I supposed you would test Miss Stirling first—see what your chances were—work up to it, gradually. Then, if all seemed propitious, confess just before we sailed. If she accepted you, all's well; if she refused you, we should be gone ere she could babble. I never dreamed that you would confide in *Miss Marbury*.—It is a beautiful scene, Parkington, a beautiful scene!" he exclaimed, suddenly, as a step sounded behind them. "Ah, Captain Herford!"

"I am looking for Miss Stirling," the Captain explained. "The Governor wants her."

"I have not seen her," Brandon replied.

"Nor I, since supper," said Parkington.

Half an hour later, when Miss Stirling came downstairs from the Governor's apartments, it was to find Sir Edward Parkington sitting on the lowest step. He arose and bowed.

"I have been waiting," he said.

"For what?" she asked.

"For you."

"You give yourself unnecessary trouble, sir."

"I give myself a pleasure."

She stepped by him, and proceeded on her way.

He followed, through the drawing-room, and the room beyond, and out to the rear piazza. Here, he sprang forward, and offered her his arm.

"I thank you," she scorned; "I do not need your assistance."

At the second step, the high heel of her slipper caught, she stumbled, and would have fallen, had not Parkington interposed.

He held her a moment, then released her.

"I thank you!" she said stiffly, and went slowly down.

"May I go along?" he asked, all the while, keeping step with her.

She did not answer.

"Miss Stirling, I addressed you," he said.

Still no answer.

"Thank you!" he replied. "You are very kind."

She stopped and looked him over, disdainfully.

"You have misinterpreted, sir," she said. "I have no intention to be kind—silence, in this instance, does not give consent."

"What have I done?" he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I went to the rose-walk—I waited—you did not come."

"When?" she inquired.

"At the time appointed—before it, indeed."

"And I was not there?"

"I could not find you."

"You waited for me?"

"At least half an hour."

"And I did not come?"

"Alas! no."

She laughed derisively. "Why do you tell me such nonsense?"

"Nonsense!" he said. "Nonsense!"

"*Lies* would be the more fitting term."

"I do not understand."

"No—there is your trouble; you do not know if I kept the rendezvous, so you play it as if *you* did!"

"As if I did!" he repeated.

She laughed again. "I suppose you will be averring that you do not understand me."

He bowed. "Pray explain," he said.

"It is for you to explain. I kept the rendezvous; you *did not*."

He tried to look his surprise. "You kept the rendezvous?"

"Yes, I kept the rendezvous; while you, sir, went strolling to the Bay with Miss Marbury—nor ever thought to cast even one look toward the rose-walk."

There could be no profit in prevaricating further.

He was caught, and the quickest way out was to admit it.

"I did," he said humbly. "I did."

"Why did you not acknowledge it, at first?" she questioned.

"I thought, perhaps, you also had forgotten."

She looked at him, searchingly.

"Did you really *forget*?" she asked.

"As God is my witness!—until we were returning, I never thought of it. Then, as soon as I could leave Miss Marbury, I hastened to the rose-walk, and found it—deserted."

"It is a fine gentleman," she exclaimed, "who forgets one appointment, when another, more to his taste, intervenes!"

"I protest that you are unjust," he said. "I forgot, I admit, but I did it unwittingly and not of intention."

"Even that is unforgettable."

"But it is not unforgiveable," he pleaded.

She shook her head, and moved on, slowly.

"But it is not unforgiveable," he repeated.

"No, it is not unforgiveable," she said; "but—we will say no more about it, for the present. Whether I can forgive you, will depend on the future—there is still another matter which will require explanation," and she looked at him, thoughtfully.

"Another matter?" he interrogated—"that requires explanation, from me?"

"I think so."

"And will it call for your forgiveness, too?"

"I cannot answer," she said.

A puzzled frown appeared between his eyes.

"Does that mean, you cannot or you will not?"

"It means, I cannot—it depends upon your explanation; and whether it be asked for."

"Then the explanation is not to be made to you?"

"No!"

"To whom is it to be made?" he asked.

She shook her head. "That will be disclosed, presently."

"To-night?" he persisted.

"It will not be to-night."

"Then, we will forget it!" he said, gayly.

"The morrow may care for itself—it will be soon enough when it comes. We will fancy these trees the rose-garden—I am keeping a belated rendezvous with you." He swept the turf with his hat.

"What do you wish of me, my lady?"

"It is too late," she answered. "What I wished of you, I wish no more. It has passed from my hands—it is beyond me."

He was sobered, instantly. She could mean only that it had passed into the Governor's hands—but what?—Suddenly, he understood a part.

"I see," said he, "you wanted to give me a chance to explain; you appointed the rendezvous, and I failed you. Then, in your reasonable and just anger, you told the Governor."

She did not reply, but he knew that, thus far, he was right. His mind ran quickly back over the months that had passed since he came to Annapolis: he had cheated but rarely at cards—and not at all at the house-parties—he had led a thoroughly respectable life, trifled with no woman, victimized no man. There was only one thing that met him, insistently and always: the theft of the gold at Hedgely Hall; and it, he had returned.—Unless—unless, by some queer misadventure, she had received a letter from home, which aroused her suspicion of his identity. And there *had* come letters to her, before supper—the pinnace brought them down.—It was not Marbury's gold, Marbury was not at Whitehall denouncing him. No, it *must* be a letter!

“I had a letter from home, to-day,” he said.

She started; and he knew he had guessed it.

“From home—did it contain much gossip?” she asked.

“Enough to hurry me back—I shall return with Sir Charles Brandon.”

“Bad news?” she inquired.

He smiled. “That depends on the way one looks at it.”

He drew a little closer. It were best to lose no time, now; if his imposture had been detected, the best way to meet it, was by confession, before the Governor could act. It would go far to sustain his story, if he should tell it, voluntarily, before he knew (apparently) that any one suspected him.

"Miss Stirling," he said, looking off into the distance, "we do queer things in this world, and we travel queer paths, sometimes—but we usually, once in our lives, at least, come back to the simple truth and the plain path. I have come to them, now."

He fell to drawing diagrams in the grass with his walking-stick, tracing them over and over, while he let her wonder what was in his mind. Presently he spoke again, seemingly with much feeling, his eyes now hard upon her face.

"I am going to make a confession," he said—"whether it is a good one or a bad must rest with you; but for *you* it would not be made.—I am *not* Sir Edward Parkington."

"So I am aware," she answered.

"What! you knew?" he cried, with well feigned amazement.

"Since this evening."

"But how?" he protested. "How did you know?"

"I had a letter from Lady Catherwood, in London. She mentioned Sir Edward Parkington's coming to Annapolis—and described him. The description does not tally, in the least, with you."

("It is this letter which she has given to the Governor," he thought. "Why, the devil! did I forget the rendezvous?")

He laughed. "As far apart as the poles." Then he sobered. "My rightful name, Miss Stir-

ling, is Roger de Lysle. I am the second son of the ninth Earl of Doncaster."

"Is this identity any more stable than the other?" she asked, after a pause.

"It is—though I cannot blame you for doubting."

"How did you come by the letters of introduction?"

"Parkington's dead body was cast up on the sands beside me. I took his letters, and, in a fit of foolishness, presented them to Governor Sharpe—my own having been lost in the sea."

"And why do you tell this story to *me*?" she inquired.

"To set myself right with *you*. I shall go back to England, and no one else will ever know that it was not Sir Edward Parkington who sojourned among them."

"And why should I concern you—why wish me to know it and the others not?"

"Because I love you," he answered. "From the first day I met you, I have loved you."

"And why, sir, has it taken you so long to tell it?" she asked, after a pause.

"I would not admit it, even to myself, until the time for separation drove me to it."—He slipped his arm around her, and drew her to him. "Martha!—sweetheart!—come home with me?" he whispered.

A moment she yielded, then abruptly released herself. May be he loved her, and she loved him as well as she could any man, but that was neither here nor there. If he were a De Lysle—she would marry him; love was not essential. But was he a De Lysle?

"You must realize," she said, "that whether I love or whether I do not, I can not marry you without further proof of your real identity."

"Sir Charles Brandon will vouch for me," he answered.

"You forget, that it was you vouched for him."

"True—but he has documents which will prove him Sir Charles Brandon."

"And you had the best sort of documents to prove you Sir Edward Parkington."

"I do not know what to say. Take me on faith, sweetheart."

"It would be a dangerous experiment!" she laughed; "to marry on faith, and find you a common rogue, when we got to London."

"Do I look a common rogue?" he smiled.

She turned and let her eyes move slowly over him. He was a brave figure, certainly, in his white silk coat and breeches—his cloth of silver waistcoat—his slender, well-shaped legs—his dark hair powdered—his handsome, aristocratic face.

"No—I admit you appear of the rank you claim; and you act it, too. But I must have more than appearances and acts."

He made a gesture of resignation and defeat.

"I have done my best," he said; "I am helpless to do more—unless you will come to London, and marry me there, after I have satisfied you of my identity."

"You mean it?" she demanded. Here was good faith.

"Unreservedly," he answered. "Anything to take you back with me. Though I would rather you went as wife."

He was doing his utmost to impress her—to have her intervene with the Governor, and keep the scandal hid.

She hesitated—then the truth came with a rush.

"The letter I spoke of," she said—"Lady Catherwood's—I gave it to his Excellency to act on as he saw fit."

"My God!" he cried. "It will ruin me—he will not excuse."

"You may thank the broken rendezvous, if it does," she replied.

"That was what you wished with me!"—he exclaimed—"and when I did not come you were angry!—oh! I see, sweetheart—you *do* care, for you were jealous." He was playing the part well.

"I do not know why I did it. I was hasty. I repent." She sprang up. "I will go to the Governor—I will try to undo it. Wait here!" and she sped away.

Scarcely was she gone, when he saw her returning.

"I cannot see him, to-night," she said—"he has retired, it would only harm our chances. In the morning, I shall try again."

He took her hand, and kissed it—with wise forbearance, he did not try for her lips.

"Go!—we will hope for the best," he said. "And you may pray, as well, dear. The prayers of one's beloved are not without avail."

XIX

ARRAIGNED

BEFORE breakfast, the following morning, Colonel Sharpe sent for Maynadier.

"Sleep did it!" said the Governor. "I have made up my mind. I shall give him a chance to explain, and upon his explanation will depend my future course. Whether or not I shall take up the matter of the Marbury money, we will determine later."

"It is a wise decision," Maynadier agreed.

"I dare not do less out of consideration for my position. He has presented another man's letters, has taken that other man's name, has entered this house, and the houses of our friends under false pretenses. In short, he has acted the rogue, and he must bear the consequences."

"How can he possibly explain?" asked Maynadier. "What justification can there be for his conduct?"

"None that I can apprehend—but we must not prejudge him; we must give him a chance. I believe the law has a maxim, that every one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. You said, I think, that Marbury was not leaving Annapolis until to-night?"

"So he told me," said Maynadier.

The Governor nodded. "I have sent for him. When he arrives, we will proceed with the matter—the quicker it is settled the better. It is a nasty business, Maynadier. I like the fellow, too, damn well!—Come in!" he called, as a knock sounded on the door.—"Ah, my dear!" as Miss Stirling's face appeared, "what got you up so early?"

"I am up so early because—Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Maynadier. I thought the Governor was alone. I will withdraw——"

"By no means!" said Maynadier; "our business is over, for the time.—Permit me!" and he stepped to the door.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Colonel. "She is not going to talk secrets—what is it, Martha—permission to take some of the horses?"

"No," she replied, and glanced, meaningly, at Maynadier—who at once retired.

She waited until the door was shut.

"It is this," she said. "That letter, which I gave you last evening—I want it back again."

The Governor looked his surprise.

"You want it back again?" he asked.

"Yes—and your promise not to use it. There is nothing to be gained by exposing him, except a scandal, which must, necessarily, drag me in."

"You have changed your mind since last night," he commented.

"I have," she answered. "In less than two

weeks he will have sailed.—So, let it rest—it will profit nothing.”

He unlocked a drawer, took out Lady Catherwood’s letter, and handed it to her.

A glad smile came to her face.

“Thank you, sir! oh, thank you!” and she bent, and brushed his cheek, lightly, with her lips.

He reached up, and drew her down on the arm of his chair.

“And have you no other reason, my dear?” he asked,

“No!” with a shake of her pretty head.—“No other reason.”

He looked at her thoughtfully.

“What were you and Sir Edward—I call him that for want of a better name—talking about last night—out yonder in the moonlight?” he asked.

She laughed, a little guiltily—watching his face the while.

“He was making love to me,” she replied—“he does it very well, indeed, sir.”

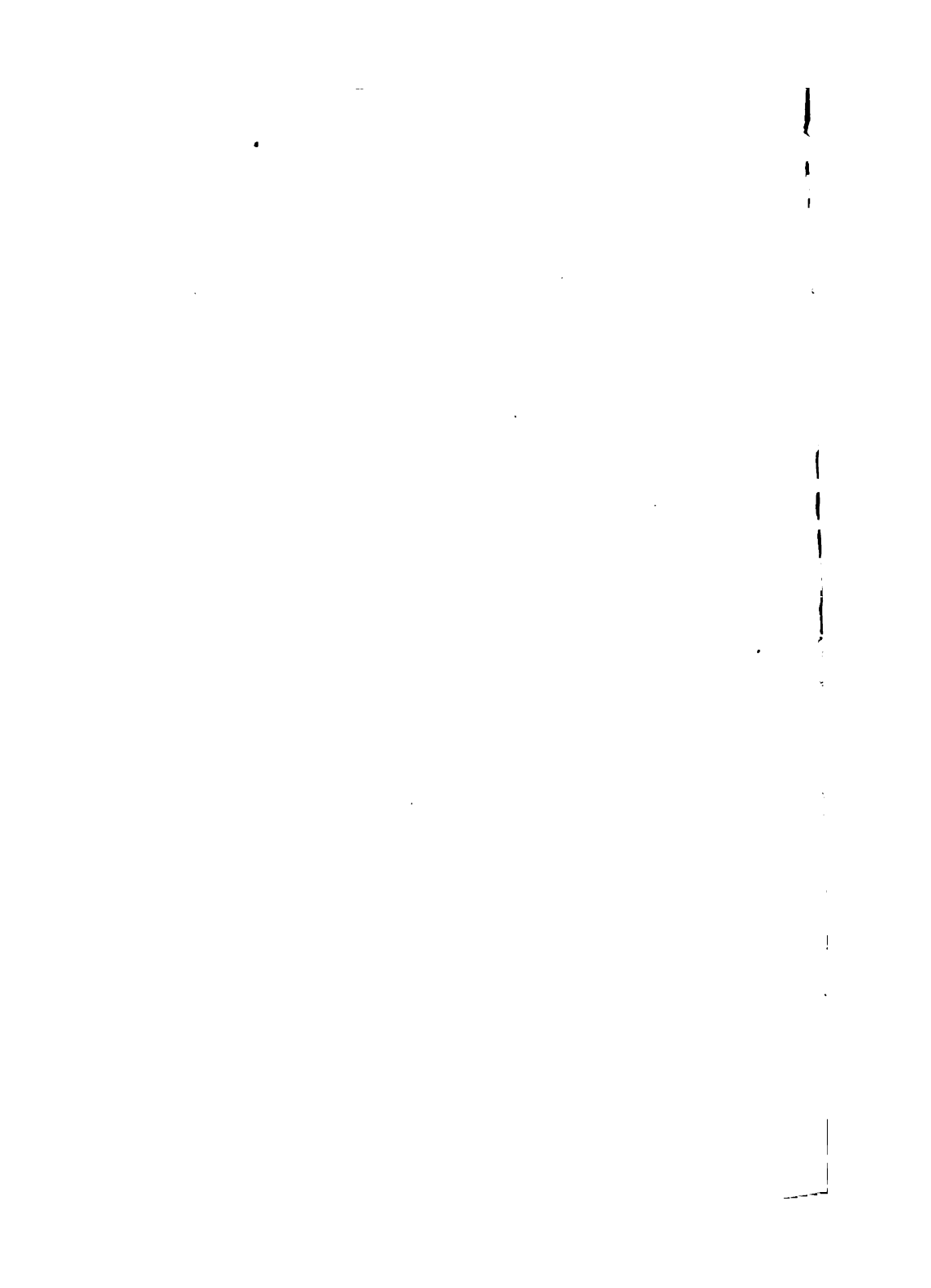
“So it would seem,” said the Governor—“so well, indeed, that you sought at once to regain the Catherwood letter, but, thinking that I had retired, came back the first thing, this morning.”

She flushed, and her eyes went toward the window.

“Just so!” he said. “I was sitting there, and saw it all—saw you leave, heard you come to my door and listen, saw you return, a moment, to him—and, now, you come again—and it is for the letter.



**"WHAT WERE YOU AND SIR EDWARD TALKING ABOUT LAST NIGHT?"
HE ASKED.**



You know that he is not Parkington, that he is an impostor—consequently, he must have told you something which explains. What was it?”

“He acknowledged that he was not Parkington; that he——”

“I told you, specifically, not to mention the letter to him!” said the Governor.

“And I obeyed you,” she answered. “Not until he had, voluntarily and of his own free will, confessed, did I refer to the letter.”

The Governor beat a tattoo on the table with his finger-tips.

“Who does he say he is?” he asked, presently.

She told him.

“Huh! Doncaster’s son, is he! How does he explain the letters, and the impersonation?”

She told him.

When she had finished, he sat silent, pulling at his chin.

“Do you think him serious in his love-making?” he asked.

“He did me the honor to propose,” she said.

“Hum!—And do you—care for him?”

“As much as I shall ever care for any man,” she answered (thinking of Maynadier). “Furthermore, it would be an excellent match for me.”

“An excellent match, if he speaks truly. There are none better, in all England, than the De Lysles.”

"He offered to wait, until we got to England, for the wedding."

"Hum—that makes something for sincerity, at least.—So, you wish to marry him, my dear?"

"I think I do," she said—"that is, if he is a De Lysle."

He shook his head, sadly. "I am sorry, Martha, to have to injure your prospects, but I must act as the Governor, and it is his duty to call him to account. He has misused the proprietor's letters, and our hospitality."

"But you gave me the letter," she expostulated. "What other proof have you that he is an impostor?"

"I gave you the letter to relieve you of all participation," the Colonel said. "I do not need it. I have abundant evidence without it, and there may be more, besides."

She gave a little gasp, and sat up.

"Then I can do nothing?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said, his hand stroking tenderly the dark tresses—"the matter must go on to its finish. The people of the Province shall not say that I knew he was an impostor, yet did not expose him. I regret it, my dear, but when one takes another's name, he commits a crime against society which cannot be tolerated."

"What shall I tell him?" she asked.

"Tell him you have the letter, and that the Governor will not use the information it contained."

"That will be the truth," she reflected.

"It will," he said; "and, further, you need not go."

And she, knowing it was useless to argue or implore, kissed him, and went, slowly, the letter of Lady Catherwood clutched tightly in her fingers.

She had no opportunity to communicate with Parkington until after breakfast, other than a significant nod, as his eyes sought hers, inquiringly. When the meal was finished, he joined her, and, presently, they sauntered out together.

"I have the letter," she said.

"You are a dear!" he exclaimed.

"And I have, also, the Governor's promise not to use either it, or the information it contains."

"You are a darling!" bending down, and whispering in her ear.

It was a caress, though he touched her not at all.

And her heart warmed to him, with a sympathy she had never felt before. Surely, he was handsome, with the handsomeness which a woman loved, a debonairness that was fascinating.

"You have done everything—you have saved me!" he exclaimed.

She plucked a rose; he took it, and drew it through his buttonhole.

"I have done what I can," she replied; "but I have not saved you."

"What? the letter!—the information——"

"Will not be used against you," she broke in;

"but, I fear that the Governor has other evidence, quite as strong and much more convincing."

His thoughts turned, instantly, to Miss Marbury. She had told—and lost no time in the telling, either, it would seem. He smiled, derisively. Brandon was right. No woman could keep a secret, unless she were vitally concerned in it.

"Well," he said, "I shall stay and face it. At least, they shall not say I ran away. Moreover, they cannot do more than unmask me—and, when the mask is off, they show a De Lysle—and between a De Lysle and a Parkington, even if the former is somewhat scar-marked, there is vast difference. I may not accompany Brandon home; but, when I go, you go with me."

She put her hand on his arm.

"Prove it, and I will go," she said.

He took her hand, regardless of who saw, and kissed it with inimitable grace, bowing low over it, the while.

"It is a bargain, my lady!" he said. "I accept your own terms. Now, with your permission, I will to Sir Charles Brandon, and take counsel with him."

As they were returning, a man came rapidly up the esplanade, from the landing, and passed them, at some little distance.

"Is not that Mr. Marbury?" Miss Stirling asked.

Parkington nodded, but did not speak.—Mar-

bury! The one man who could prove the theft! The man who could identify Long-Sword! Why should he have come to Whitehall—and at this particular time?

“Was he not expected?” he asked, with assumed carelessness.

“No,” she replied. “He likely comes to see the Governor, on business which requires his personal approval.”

“I think I will hasten to Sir Charles,” he said, now thoroughly alarmed.

Meanwhile, Marbury had been met, as he neared the house, by Maynadier, who had noted his approach.

“What does his Excellency want with me?” he asked. “Has it to do with the theft?”

“It has—with the theft, and something more. We will go in—the Governor awaits you in the drawing-room; he will relate the exact facts.”

“Mr. Marbury,” said Colonel Sharpe, laying aside the Gazette he was reading, and offering his guest a chair, “I have sent for you because I want your aid.”

“I appreciate the honor, sir,” replied Marbury, “but, as I am the only person concerned, I request your Excellency to let the matter rest. Moreover, the money was returned; why should it not be let rest?”

“I think you do not quite understand the situa-

tion," returned the Governor. "Let me, briefly, outline the facts. . . ."

Marbury listened, in impassive silence. The change of name did not affect him; he knew of another such, much closer home. But the stealing of another's identity, and the presentation of his letters, were serious matters to the Colonists, and, he admitted, any one who was guilty ought to be exposed.

"I was sure you would see it as we do, Mr. Marbury, when you knew everything!" said the Governor.

"Yes—the theft from me—if he *were* the thief—was solely, my affair," was the reply; "this, however, concerns us all. If the one fit into the other, I shall bear my part."

The Governor struck a bell; the orderly, on duty, entered.

"My compliments to Captain Herford," said the Colonel, "and say, I wish to see him."

The man saluted and withdrew. In a moment, Captain Herford entered.

"Captain Herford, you will say, to Sir Edward Parkington and to Sir Charles Brandon, that the Governor desires their attendance in the drawing-room. Then, station the guard outside the windows, with two just without the doors. You understand?"

Herford's heels came together, and his hand rose to his forehead.

"Yes, your Excellency!" he replied, with a surprised lift of the eye-brows toward Maynadier.

He found Parkington and Brandon together, pacing back and forth on the esplanade. He delivered his message curtly, faced about, and tramped off. These men were not to his liking, and in his official capacity, as his Excellency's aide-de-camp, it did his small soul good to treat them with scant courtesy.

"Well, it has come!" said Parkington.

Brandon was looking after Herford, with a frown.

"That fellow," he observed, "needs to be taught some civility with a club—a walking stick is not stout enough to be effective."

"Never mind Herford," smiled Parkington. "Come and help his Excellency hold court, for my particular benefit."

Brandon was wearing his sword, and, now, he gave it a hitch forward, so that it lay close to his hand.

"You do not anticipate using it?" his friend asked.

"I do not know," said he, with an ominous shake of the head. "One can never tell how suddenly the occasion may arise. That is why I am never without it—it has saved my life, a score of times, in the last four years."

"We are not flying the Jolly Roger, now," Parkington commented.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "I am not so sure."

"You are not in danger."

"You forget that Marbury is with the Governor."

"He will not recognize you—you, yourself, said so."

"That was before you were suspected—I counted on your word to prove my name."

"Then do not come with me—do not run the risk!" urged Parkington.

"No, I must brave it out. To decamp, now, would be useless. I was summoned, I presume, because you vouched for me—but, if I do not respond, that instant they will understand I had good cause for going, and I should be caught ere I had gone a mile. Come on—it is a good game and we will play it out. . . . You see!" he said, as they entered the house, pointing to the opposite doorway, through which could be seen the guard parading. "It were folly to do otherwise."

Every one was down at the race track, looking at the horses, the house was deserted, save for the servants. Miss Stirling, even, was gone with the rest—Marbury's coming had delayed the matter, she supposed, and some regard must be paid to the duties of hostess.

The two men crossed the entrance and knocked at the drawing-room door, which, contrary to cus-

tom, was closed. Instantly, it was swung open—and the Governor bade them enter.

He was standing with his back to the fire-place, his hands behind him, his face grave and thoughtful. He returned, with studied courtesy, their bows of greeting, and motioned for them to be seated. Maynadier, placid and unmoved, was on one side, Marbury, grim-faced but plainly ill at ease, on the other.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Sharpe, "I regret that it is as the Governor of Maryland, and not as Colonel Sharpe, that I have had to request your presence here, this morning."

"We took it, from the formal manner of our summons, that your Excellency wished to confer with us in your official capacity," said Parkington, easily.

The Governor bowed again.

"Which, being understood," said he, "we can proceed to business. . . . Sir Edward Parkington, I have received information of such a pertinent character, that I have no other course than to question your identity. I do it with the greatest reluctance—you have been a guest in my house, and in the houses of the prominent men of the Colony—you presented letters, from Lord Baltimore, which were regular, and which entitled you to be received. We are informed, now, that you are not their rightful owner—in other words, that you are an im-

postor. What, sir, have you to say in explanation?"

Parkington laughed a little, easy laugh, and brushed a speck of dust from his coat sleeve.

"I have nothing to say," he replied.—"Your Excellency's information is correct. I am *not* Sir Edward Parkington."

The Governor's jaw closed tight, his face grew very stern, and, for a brief time, he did not answer.

"How did you come into possession of Lord Baltimore's letters?" he asked, at length. "Did you steal them?"

"No!" said Parkington, "unless taking them from a dead man is stealing." . . . He shrugged his shoulders. "I will tell you the facts, since you wish to know them."

He drew out his snuff-box—offered it to the others, with a graceful gesture—took a pinch himself, and told his story.

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"And you say that you did this thing in a fit of foolishness?" the Governor asked, when he had finished.

"Yes—I did not appreciate how difficult it would be to throw off the false identity. That is why I was going home: to regain myself."

"Who, in truth, are you?" asked the Governor. (He did not care to disclose that Miss Stirling had told him.)

"Roger de Lysle, second son of the Earl of Doncaster," was the answer.

Maynadier turned and looked at him, with sudden interest—Marbury's grim visage relaxed a trifle. There was virtue, in those days, in a name.

"Have you the means of proving it?" said his Excellency—"any papers—anything, indeed?"

"My papers were lost when *The Sally* foundered. But Sir Charles Brandon can attest me."

The Governor turned, inquiringly, to Brandon, who was sitting somewhat back, and quite within the shadow.

"I can substantiate his statement that he is Doncaster's son," said Brandon. "I have known the family, intimately, for years."

As he spoke, Marbury suddenly threw up his head, much as a dog does to the scent, and his sharp eyes glistened. At the end, he arose, and, with never a glance at any one, went out.

"The difficulty is," said the Governor, "that this man (who admits he is an impostor) introduced you. Have you any means of identification?"

"It is a proper question," returned Brandon, promptly.

Arising, he took a bundle of papers from his pocket, and handed them to the Governor.

The latter examined them, one by one, carefully and slowly. When he had finished, he passed them on to Maynadier.

"They are regular," he said, "but rather old—

the latest is dated more than four years back."

"I am Sir Charles Brandon, now, just as well as four years ago!" he laughed. Then, he explained: "It is four years since I left England."

"And you have not, in that time, had letters from home?"

"None."

The Governor nodded, then turned to Maynadier, and the two conversed in low tones.

Brandon stretched out his legs and frowned—the talk had stirred old ashes that still smouldered.

De Lysle, untroubled and unconcerned, picked up the Gazette, the Governor had been reading, and glanced over it.

The first three columns had to do with news, three months old, of the Court and Parliament. He passed them by. The column which did for Boston, and New York and Philadelphia, also, went unread. The stick of Annapolis doings, for the past week, was glanced at, curiously. Then, down at the bottom of the last column, something in larger type, caught his eye. He looked, casually, at it, then looked again—then read it, amazed, and a second time, read it, and the third time.

Just at that moment, Marbury re-entered. Brandon turned his head from him, but the former stopped, deliberately peered in his face, and wheeled on the Governor.

"Your Excellency," he said, "it would appear that you have seined for a small fish, and caught

a shark. This man you know, I believe, as Sir Charles Brandon?"

"He was so introduced," returned the Governor, a little surprise showing in his voice; "and his papers bear him out—albeit, they are some four years old."

Marbury laughed, scornfully.

"The papers seem to bear out Parkington, too!" he said. "However, they may be right enough—he may be Sir Charles Brandon—but—he is, also, Long-Sword the Pirate."

XX

THE PENALTY OF A BIRTH-MARK

If Marbury had played for effect, he could not have done it better.

For an instant, no one spoke—no one even stirred. Then, the Governor recovered himself.

“My God! man! do you realize what you have said?” he exclaimed.

“I do,” said Marbury; “and I am ready to prove it.” He strode to the window. “Let Jamison and his mate come in!” he shouted.

At the same time, the Governor raised his voice.

“Herford!” he called, “the guard! the guard!—Your pardon, sir,” addressing Brandon, “but the seriousness of the charge obligates it.”

De Lysle had sprung up in indignation; Brandon stayed him with a gesture.

“I understand,” he said, crossing his legs, with unconcern. “It is a proper precaution. If I were Long-Sword, there might be need for them. As I am not he, I must ask Mr. Marbury to produce his evidence at once. It is scarcely fitting, that Sir Charles Brandon rest under an imputation so serious, an instant longer than is required to disprove it.”

“Let Jamison, and the mate, wait in the outer room until required,” said Colonel Sharpe, to Herford who, at that moment, appeared at the head of

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the guard.—“Now, Mr. Marbury, we are ready to hear your proofs.”

“Your Excellency knows of the attack on Hedgely Hall,” Marbury said, “and the capture of their leader, who, by his own admission to me, was Long-Sword—also, of his escape, after killing his guard. I had every chance to observe him, during the long colloquy concerning ransom, and, afterward, on the ship. The voice, the face, the build, every action of the man is the same. I identify him, beyond question. And more, I have had no communication with Jamison and his mate, their ship brought me here, and I have sent for them—I have not seen them. They have never seen Sir Charles Brandon. I am willing to submit the case on their testimony. Let them confront him. If they do not sustain me, I will withdraw the charge, and apologize, most humbly.”

The Governor turned to Herford, who, sword drawn, was standing by the closed door, and nodded for him to admit Jamison.

The skipper entered, hesitatingly, and halted just within the room. The soldiers, the Governor's mansion, the unfamiliar surroundings, the sudden summons, the mystery of it all had produced their natural result. He was frightened.

“Jamison,” said Colonel Sharpe, “will you do us the favor to look at the gentleman, immediately on your left, and tell us whether you have ever seen him.”

The skipper turned, slowly; at the same instant, Marbury threw back the hangings from the window, and the morning sun flooded the apartment.

"Good God!" he exclaimed, starting back. "It is Long-Sword! Long-Sword the Pirate!"

"That will do," said the Governor; "stand aside. Now, summon the mate."

He also entered, slowly, as though doubtful of his reception, his hat held nervously in his fingers, his eyes shifting rapidly from side to side, yet appreciating nothing. When the Governor spoke, he jumped as though he had been struck, instead, and the question had to be repeated before he understood its tenor. Then he wheeled, suddenly—and came face to face with Brandon.

Instantly, he let out a yell, and sprang clear to the other side of the room.

"Long-Sword! Long-Sword!" he cried.

Brandon laughed, lightly.

"Long-Sword must have been the very devil!" he said. Then, he became grave. "Surely, your Excellency will not view too seriously what must be a very striking resemblance between this pirate and myself. But, that you may be relieved of all embarrassment, I am willing to go to England under guard. There, that I am Sir Charles Brandon can be instantly attested by any one at Court, his Majesty, himself, included. If you do this, I will give you, in addition, my parole that I will not seek to escape."

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"Why should you do it?" exclaimed De Lysle, seeing the play, and seeking to aid it.

"Because it is proper that I should aid his Excellency in his perplexity," Brandon said. "Three witnesses name me as Long-Sword; it is absurd, and the quickest way to prove the absurdity is to send me home for identification. It is the penalty I pay, for being a pirate's double."

"Will you be satisfied, if I send him to England under guard?" the Governor asked Marbury.

"No, I am not satisfied," was the answer. "He may, in truth, be Sir Charles Brandon, but that does not prevent him from being Long-Sword, too. By his own admission (I heard it, as I stood in the outer room), he has not been home for four years, and he has had no word from England in the interim. Why?—Why?—Where has he been these four years?—what doing? It is just about that period since Long-Sword the Pirate appeared. Strange coincidence, is it not, when you consider the resemblance?—and the further fact, that he is discreetly silent as to his whereabouts during these four years. I was willing to let him go, when he escaped. I wanted no further bother concerning him. But, when he actually has the effrontery to invade your Excellency's house, as a guest, and impose upon the good people of this Province, I say, let him be punished. No, sir, I am not satisfied to have him sent home, and then released, if he be identified as Brandon."

The Governor nodded, gravely.

"What have you to say, monsieur, to the proposition, that you could be both Sir Charles Brandon and Long-Sword?" he asked.

Brandon raised his hands, expressively.

"That may be true," said he. "But an English gentleman, of means, is not likely to become a pirate."

"Your Excellency," said Jamison, coming a step forward, "might I be permitted to say something?"

Colonel Sharpe turned to him, with a frown.

"Speak up!" he said, shortly. "What is it?"

"Long-Sword had a collar-bone broken in the fight, when he was captured—" began Jamison.

"And you mean, that there may be evidence of it?" the Governor interrupted. "Very good!—Brandon, will you submit to examination?"

"Certainly, sir! I shall be glad to let either you or Mr. Maynadier inspect my shoulders. Why did you not speak of this sooner, fellow?" he added.

It was the evidence he had been hoping for—had, indeed, depended on to establish his innocence. And they had been long in coming to it! The bones had knit as neatly as before the break.

"And when you are about it," added Jamison, "you might look for a star-shaped birth-mark, under the left arm. I noticed it, when I bound up his injury. If it is not there, then he is not Long-Sword."

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"Very good! my man, they may look for the birth-mark, too," said Brandon.

He crossed to the window, where the sun would fall full upon him, divesting himself of his coat as he went; glanced out at the turf, below, tossed the coat, carelessly, on a chair, and, putting one hand on the ledge, suddenly vaulted through the opening.

It was so totally unexpected, that, for an instant, no one moved. Then Captain Herford, with a shout to his men to follow, bounded across the room, and leaped out in pursuit.

Brandon had slipped on the grass, when he landed, and Herford alighted almost in his arms, and a trifle beyond him. Both men recovered themselves at the same instant, but Herford was between Brandon and freedom. Like a flash, he drew his sword, and flung himself upon the aide.

Herford was not an expert, but he had agility, and, that first requisite of a fencer, a strong wrist, and he held his own, for the moment that was necessary to enable the guard to come up. Just as they appeared, he felt the other's sword pass through his shoulder, and he knew no more.

Brandon whipped out the blade, and sprang forward. Too late! A dozen soldiers were in the way. He put his back to the house, and waited.

He would die, here—die as Long-Sword—die with the music of the steel, perhaps the roll of musketry, in his ears. It was better—much better—than the rope.

A figure leaped down from the window. It was De Lysle.

"Brandon!" he exclaimed. "Let me aid you."

The other waved him back.

"You cannot aid me. I am alone on the ship," he said. "Farewell, my friend.—Ah! place for his Excellency!"

The Governor came hurriedly out, followed by Maynadier and Marbury. Constable, and the rest of the men of the house party, attracted by the unusual commotion, were hastening over from the race track, though they could not yet see what was occurring on the opposite side of the house.

Colonel Sharpe took in the whole scene at a glance:—the solitary figure against the wall, the dozen soldiers that hemmed him in, the wounded Herford lying on the grass, the blood blotching breast and shoulder.

And he swore a great oath, and, kneeling, raised the Captain's head.

"He is not dead!" he said. "Here, Maynadier, look to him, will you?" Then he arose and faced Brandon.

The latter's sword went up in salute.

"Perhaps your Excellency will favor me with a pass or two?" he said.

The Governor's face was set and stern, for the time, all mercy had passed out of it.

"For I *am* Long-Sword," he continued, "even

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as I *am* Sir Charles Brandon. And, ere we grow busy in the business of death, I want to say, in order that my friend, De Lysle, may not be misunderstood, that, although he recognized me after he entered the cabin, where I was prisoner, yet he knew nothing of my coming to Annapolis, until I walked in upon him at the Coffee-house. I was going home. Long-Sword the Pirate was to be buried, forever. In ten days, I should have sailed. . . . But the Fates were against me—I shall not go home—I shall die as Long-Sword, instead.” He bowed gracefully to the Governor. “I thank your Excellency! Now, cry on your dogs!”

At this instant, Constable came through the house and out on the esplanade.

“What is it?” he exclaimed—“what does it mean?”

“It is the passing of Long-Sword the Pirate,” Brandon answered. “Will not your Excellency begin?”

“I would much rather you surrendered,” said Colonel Sharpe.

“No doubt! it would save you a few lives,” he mocked.

“You decline to yield?”

Brandon bowed.

“Then shoot him, sergeant!” was the order.

But before a trigger could be pulled, or a flint-lock fall, Brandon was upon them. His sword flashed in and out, there was a swaying back and

forth, shouts and cries, the clubbing of muskets, the groans of the wounded, a *mêlée*, in which all were mingled in a blur of strife and struggle. . . .

Then, the line parted; and through the opening, his sword at the lunge, staggered Brandon. Blood gushed from his face and head, from his breast, from his legs. He was almost sped. He came a little way—faltered—stopped. A soldier stepped out behind him and passed his hanger through his throat. He fell without a word. So, Long-Sword died.

The Governor, his wrath passed, looked down at the dead, and shook his head, sadly.

"He was a brave man!" he said. "May I meet death as fearlessly, when my time comes. . . . Gentlemen, this deplorable scene is over—let me suggest that you hasten to the ladies, and keep them on the other side of the house, until all traces of the conflict have been removed."

He hooked his arm within Maynadier's, and went slowly in.

"I have had enough of crime and punishment," he said, as they passed the doorway. "What think you, shall we excuse Parkington—let him depart in peace, for England?"

"Yes!" replied Maynadier.

"How say you, Marbury?" the Governor asked.

"As I have said all along: let it rest! let him go!"

"There are some things that are not explained,

but they can bide—yes, I think that he may go.—
Parkington!” he called.

Parkington, who was kneeling by the body of his dead friend, arose and came forward.

“Sir Edward!” said the Governor. “We have decided to pursue your matter no further, upon the condition, however, that you will continue to bear the name of Parkington, and reside in this house, as a guest, until the first ship sails for England. Are you content?”

Parkington bowed low. “More than content, your Excellency. I am deeply grateful. Moreover, there are pressing reasons, now, for my instant return to England.”

He drew the Annapolis paper from his pocket, and, pointing to the item in larger type at the foot of the last column, passed it across.

Colonel Sharpe read:

“FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD!

“For information sent to the undersigned, that will lead to the location of the present whereabouts of the Honourable Roger James Howard de Lysle, who, it is thought, sailed for America, incognito, about the first of April, last past. He is of average size, with black hair and eyes, fair complexion, clear cut features, and fine bearing. By the sudden demise of the persons intervening, he has succeeded to the title and estates of the Earl of Doncaster.”

The Governor ceased. "My lord," he said, extending his hand, "you have my congratulations! But I think, for reasons which you will understand," he added, "you best cling to the old name, so long as you are in America."

The Earl bowed. "Your Excellency is right. As Parkington I came to Annapolis, as Parkington I shall leave it.—Will you wait here one moment, sir?"

He returned, presently, with Miss Stirling.

"My dear," he said, "I did myself the honor of asking you to marry me, when I was simply Roger de Lysle; and, though you did not promise, yet you were good enough to consider it not unfavorably, I thought. Now, in the presence of his Excellency the Governor, your uncle, I do myself the further honor of asking you to become the Countess of Doncaster."

Miss Stirling's heart beat wildly.

"The Countess of Doncaster!" she repeated, wonderingly. "You are the Earl?"

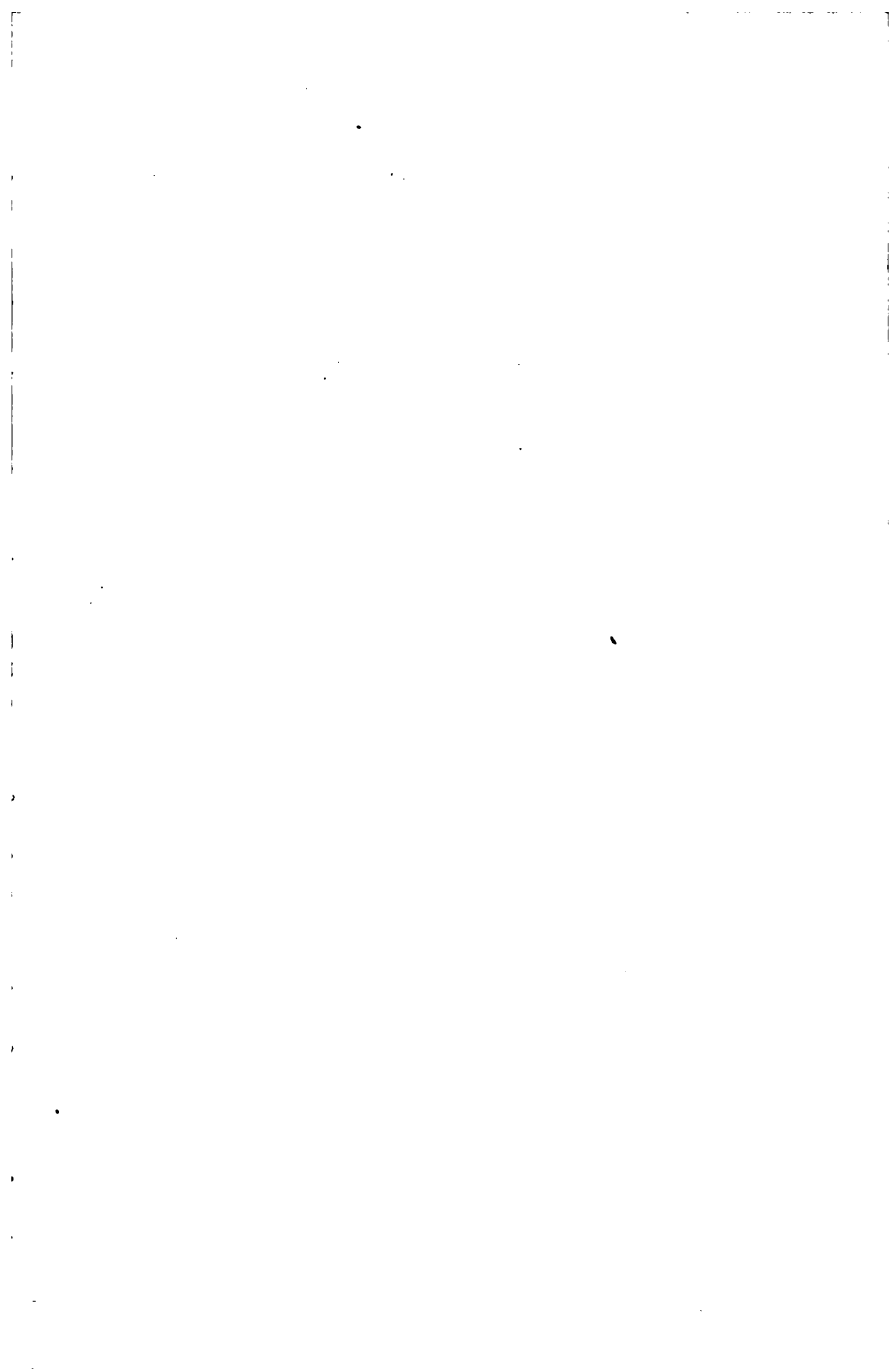
"I am the Earl," he answered. Then he smiled, the winning, fascinating smile that was his, and held out his arms to her. "Will you go home with me, dear?" he asked.

Without hesitation, she went to him.

"I will go, my lord," she answered. "I will go."

FINIS.

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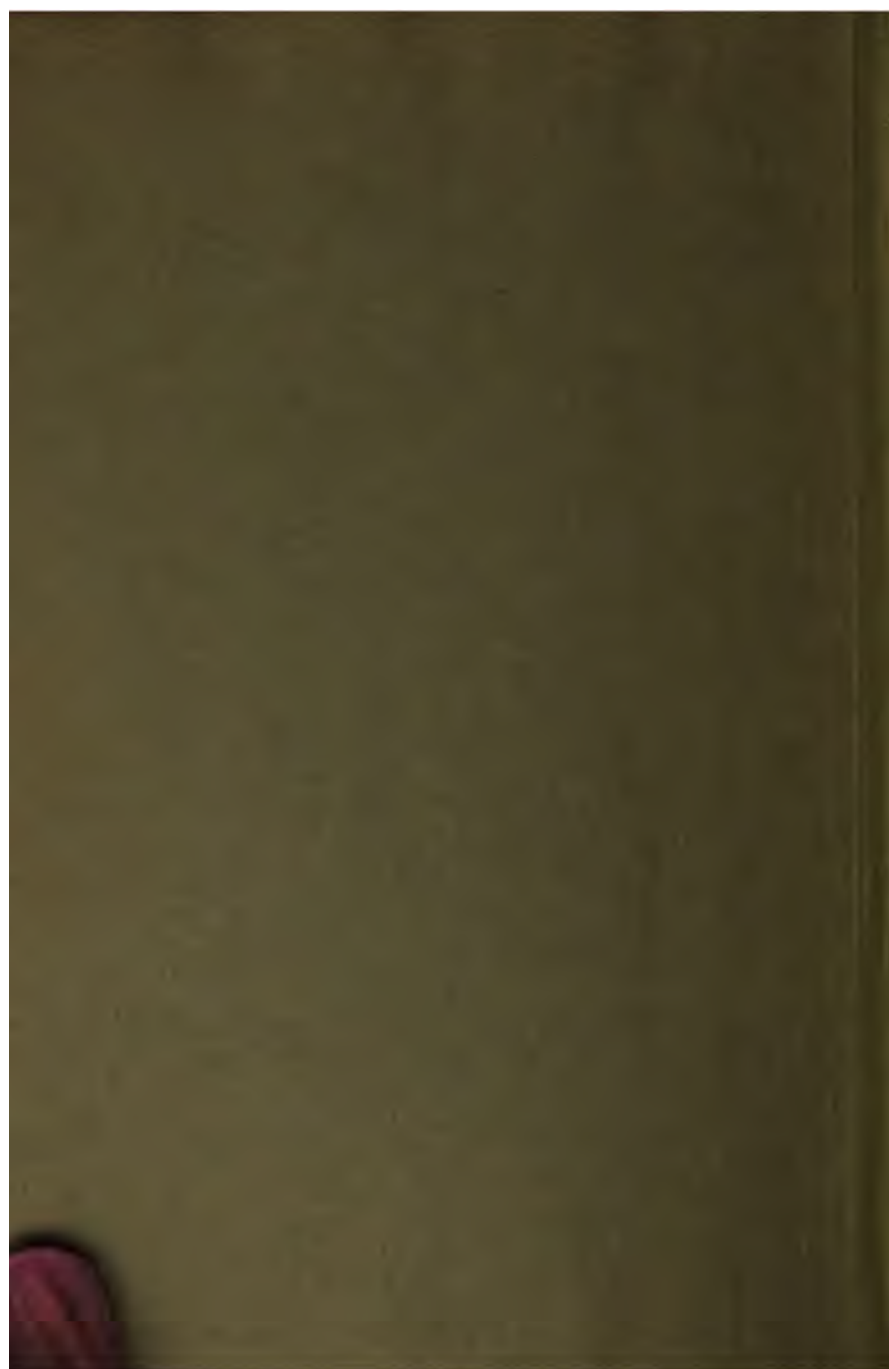
1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions of the Board of Directors of the Corporation. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and each name is followed by the position to which he or she has been appointed. The names are as follows:

Name	Position
Mr. J. H. Smith	President
Mr. W. H. Jones	Vice President
Mr. R. H. Brown	Secretary
Mr. T. H. Green	Treasurer
Mr. L. H. White	Director
Mr. M. H. Black	Director
Mr. N. H. Gray	Director
Mr. O. H. Blue	Director
Mr. P. H. Red	Director
Mr. Q. H. Yellow	Director
Mr. R. H. Purple	Director
Mr. S. H. Pink	Director
Mr. T. H. Brown	Director
Mr. U. H. Green	Director
Mr. V. H. White	Director
Mr. W. H. Black	Director
Mr. X. H. Gray	Director
Mr. Y. H. Blue	Director
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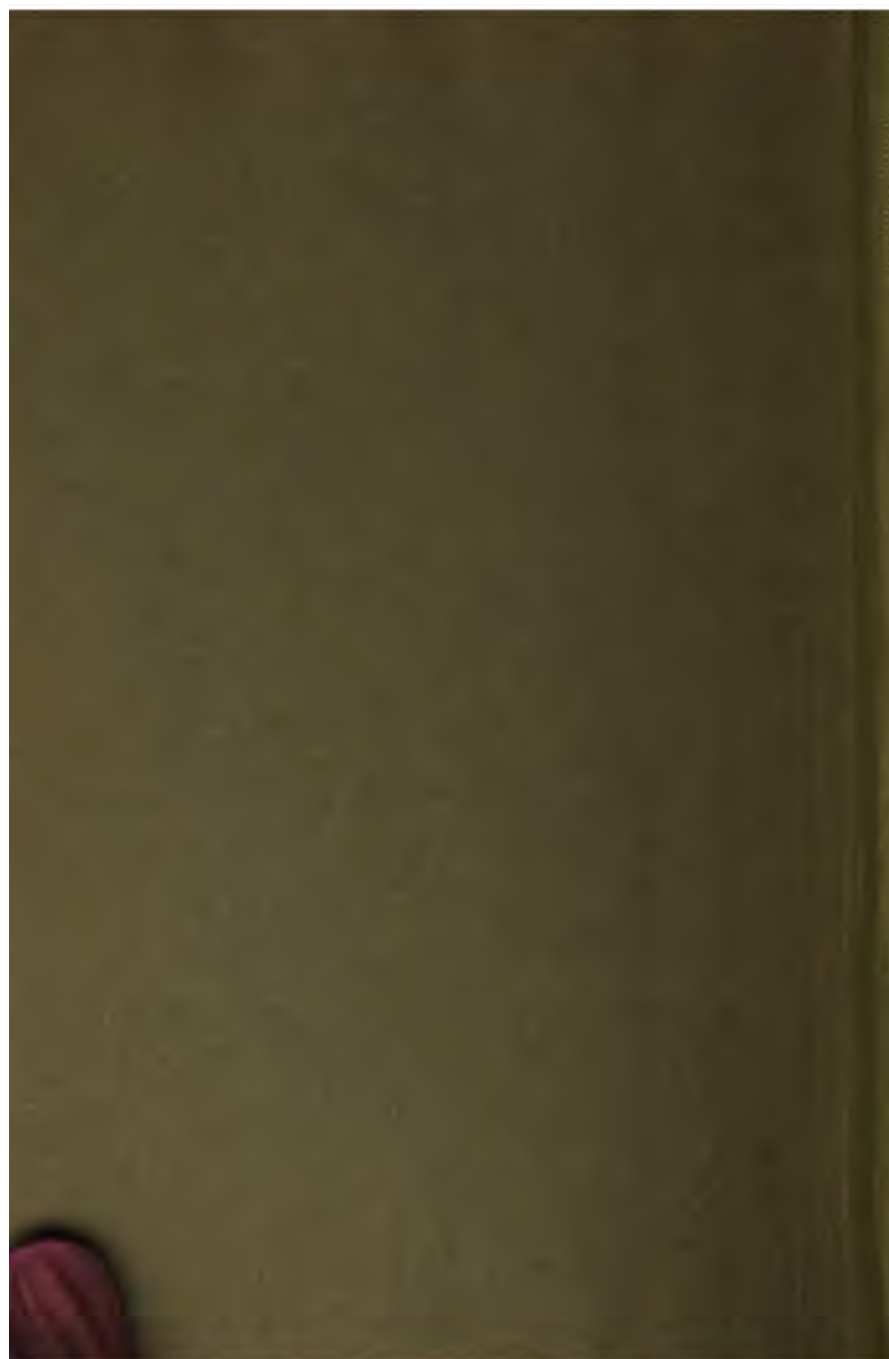
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